



Influenza vaccine supply for the 2006/7 season: low yield of recommended strain may lead to delivery delays

The European Vaccine Manufacturers¹ are encountering delays in their production for the coming season due to the low manufacturing yield² of one of the recommended strains (H3N2) for inclusion in the 2006/7 flu vaccine. In collaboration with European and national regulatory authorities, solutions are put in place to improve the situation. Furthermore, vaccine manufacturers are also extending the production campaign in order to supply the requested quantities.

Potential consequences for upcoming flu vaccination campaigns

As a result of this issue, the supply of flu vaccines in the European market should start at approximately the same time as originally planned, but it is likely that fewer doses will be initially available and that supply will be spread over a longer period of time.

Proposed solution

The EVM members suggest that public health authorities consider a flexible start to their 2006/7 influenza vaccination campaigns, in close collaboration with their suppliers, and extend their vaccination programmes through to the end of the year to cover the recommended population in each EU country.

As a result of this action, the EVM members expect that sufficient vaccine will be available to ensure that influenza vaccination programmes can be completed this coming season.

¹ EVM represents the following influenza vaccine manufacturers: Baxter, Berna Biotech (a Crucell company), GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals, Novartis Vaccines, Sanofi-Pasteur, Sanofi-Pasteur MSD and Solvay Pharmaceuticals. EVM members represent around 70% of worldwide influenza vaccine production.

² Yield determines the productivity of each vaccine strain in bulk production.

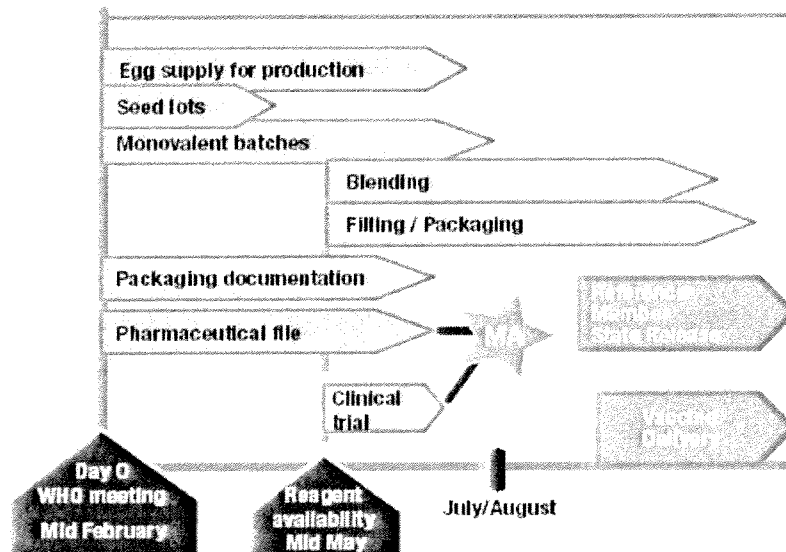
ANNEX

Influenza vaccine production

Each year new influenza vaccines need to be produced in order to confer effective protection against the current circulating strains of the virus, which can change from year to year.

Global surveillance of influenza viruses is conducted throughout the year by the WHO Influenza Surveillance Network, which provides information on currently circulating strains and identifies the appropriate strains to be included in next season's influenza vaccine. Each year, the European Medicines Agency then confirms the vaccine composition for the coming season.

The standard influenza vaccine production schedule*: a tight timeframe



*The timing indicated in the graph does not reflect the situation for this year

Use of influenza vaccines

Influenza vaccination is recommended each year. The risk groups will vary between countries depending on national practices and guidelines, but in general vaccination is recommended for the following populations:

- All individuals above a nationally defined age limit
- Other groups with specific medical conditions, according to national policies (e.g. asthma, diabetes etc).