

19<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Dear Doctor,

I am writing to you as a member of the Sentinel GP Influenza Surveillance network to ask if you will consider participating in the seventh European-wide study on influenza vaccine effectiveness (IMOVE). As some of you are aware this study has been undertaken each influenza season since the 2009 pandemic. The data reported from Irish sentinel GPs proved to be of great value when assessing low vaccine effectiveness (VE) caused by the influenza A(H3) mismatch during the 2014/2015 influenza season and helped inform decisions regarding public health interventions, such as the use of antivirals.

As influenza viruses constantly evolve and vaccines are reformulated every year, influenza VE from previous years cannot be used to estimate VE in subsequent years. Having influenza VE estimates as soon as possible and monitoring the effectiveness along the course of the influenza season is essential to:

1. Estimate VE by influenza type/subtype
2. Understand the factors affecting influenza VE, the duration of protection, the role of repeated seasonal vaccinations,
3. Identify key influenza virus phenotypic or genotypic evolutions that could affect vaccine performances.
4. Target complementary or alternative public health measures (e.g. antivirals) for population subgroups in whom the vaccine may be less effective

This study in Ireland is a collaboration between the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC), the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) and the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP). This project is also being carried out in a number of other European countries and is co-ordinated by EpiConcept, an independent team of epidemiology and public health experts based in France who are funded by the EC and ECDC to undertake these studies.

Even if you have not participated before, please consider doing so this year as our VE estimates improve with larger numbers of patients recruited into the study. The experience of previous GP participants is that participation in the study involves very little additional work on top of routine influenza surveillance. If you agree to participate in the 2015/2016 study, you will receive more detailed instructions. However, in brief, each GP will be asked to swab individuals with influenza-like illness (ILI) (with no contraindication for influenza vaccine) who are consulting at the practice during the flu season and to complete a short form for each person. In return, you will receive a newsletter and a copy of the study report in addition to a grant of €650 to each practice that participates.

If you are willing to participate, please email Lisa Domegan ([lisa.domegan@hse.ie](mailto:lisa.domegan@hse.ie)) at HPSC. **I would appreciate it if you could respond by October 28<sup>th</sup> at the latest.** In addition, I would be grateful if you could advise Lisa whether you want to complete the short patient form electronically using the online form or whether you would prefer to use a paper based form. If you require further details, please contact either Lisa or Joan O'Donnell ([joan.odonnell@hse.ie](mailto:joan.odonnell@hse.ie)).

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Michael Joyce