Vaccine Effectiveness Study

The Vaccine Effectiveness Study was commenced in 2009 in collaboration with the HPSC, the ICGP, and the NVRL

Overview

As influenza viruses constantly evolve and vaccines are reformulated every year, influenza vaccine effectiveness (VE) from previous years cannot be used to estimate VE in subsequent years.

In light of the emergence of the new pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus, having vaccine effectiveness estimates as soon as possible and monitoring the effectiveness along the course of the pandemic is essential to:

- Decide on recommendations for the use of the vaccine
- Target complementary or alternative public health measures e.g. antivirals) for population subgroups in whom the vaccine may be less effective
- Allow for precise estimates of the impact of the current vaccination strategies on the burden of disease to support vaccination campaigns
- Trigger further investigation on seasonal and pandemic vaccines
- Better manage and respond to expected reports of vaccine failures
- Counter balance the reports of adverse events following immunization by providing elements for an adequate risk management and cost effectiveness analysis.

The Study

Patients with flu symptoms are invited to participate in the study. This will involve the doctor assessing your symptoms, undertaking a medical examination and if further investigation is required, he/she invites the patient to participate in the study. If invited to participate and the patient is agreeable, there are two parts to the study as follows:

The first part involves the GP asking some questions about the patients' illness or other illnesses which they may have, their general wellbeing and whether or not they got the flu vaccine this year or in the past.

The second part involves having a test for influenza. This is a nose and throat swab which the GP would normally takes to diagnose flu. Taking nose and throat swabs may cause some discomfort. They can cause the patient to cough, gag, feel nausea or, rarely, vomit. The nasal swab and nasal wash can irritate the lining of the nose and rarely cause a minor nosebleed.

The swab will then be sent to the laboratory and tested for flu. The GP will then advise the patient of the results and offer suitable treatment and advice.

The information collected will be anonymised and not identifiable. Strict confidentiality is assured throughout. The results of the study will be used to advance our understanding of influenza vaccine effectiveness and will help inform further public health policies in Ireland and in the European Union. These results may also be published in scientific journals but no participants' names or clinical details will be published.

Instructions

GP's participating in the study are asked to swab **5 patients displaying ILI symptoms** per week and fill out a standardised Questionnaire during the consultation.