

12 May 2023

Olivia Haslam
Senior Advisor Immunisation
National Immunisation Programme

Sent via email to: olivia.haslam@health.govt.nz

Dear Olivia,

Re: Submission on barriers preventing community pharmacy from offering Boostrix (TDaP) vaccinations

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback in response to your email of Friday 5 May 2023 on our thoughts or experiences on the ability of community pharmacy to offer Boostrix (TDaP) vaccinations, in particular to hapū māmā.

We believe community pharmacy has “stepped up to the plate” admirably in various roles over recent years, none more so than in the vaccination space.

Lessons learnt from the Covid-19 vaccination rollout were that (among others) the development and use of technology tools like the National Immunisation Booking System (Book My Vaccine), supply logistics and management tools, and population engagement and invitation tools contributed to consumer uptake and its success.

The full scale and uptake of the Covid-19 vaccination programme was dependent upon these and other national management tools being in place *before* the peak vaccination period. It also highlighted the adaptability of community pharmacy in utilising these tools, even when a lot of it had to be implemented “on the fly” and under tremendous pressure.

We believe more time needs to be allowed for the general public to become aware of the availability of the Boostrix vaccination service via community pharmacy, which only became funded to hapū māmā and other eligible populations in 2022, and also for community pharmacy to be able to provide a substantial contribution to the uptake of the Boostrix vaccine, which is, in all fairness, based on opportunistic administration within specific periods.

Most community pharmacies are still “finding their feet” with regards to all the myriad of services they can provide. This includes changes in workflow, workforce, and in many cases the physical workspaces. Therefore, it is incredibly important to recognise that community pharmacy’s willingness and even, barring workforce constraints, ability to provide these valuable services should not be doubted. Before any decision is made to potentially remove the funding of Boostrix vaccinations from community pharmacy there should be an opportunity for the sector to provide robust feedback.

Please find below a list of our perceived barriers that may be preventing community pharmacy from offering Boostrix (TDaP) vaccinations or delaying uptake of the service.

Funding barriers:

- Community pharmacy should not have to purchase and then be reimbursed for *any* vaccine stock, as per other providers, and vaccine stock should be provided at zero cost for opportunistic administration to further improve access.
- To promote uptake and delivery of the general vaccination service, vaccination fees should be per vaccine given, not one fee for multiple vaccines given or a lesser amount for co-administered vaccines (as raised already by the Immunisation Taskforce).
- Funding should be available for the pregnant person's partner and immediate members living in a household to reduce the spread of pertussis. Families need to be able to be opportunistically vaccinated all in one go.

Marketing and/or public perception barriers:

- The public are confused about where they can go to obtain different vaccinations, i.e., some vaccinations are available at pharmacies, others are only available from general practice, and in addition there are varying degrees of funding depending on the provider. If all vaccinations were available at both community pharmacies and general practices and the funding was the same wherever the vaccination was provided then this may lessen the confusion (and make the marketing easier in turn), and the public will be able to decide where they would like to go to obtain their vaccinations based on where they feel most comfortable and when it is convenient and accessible to them. The funding of more vaccinations in community pharmacy could also increase the viability of the service in low-income areas with no private vaccine market, raise the profile of vaccines and the vaccination service for pharmacy staff (making them top of mind) and increase consumer familiarity with pharmacy delivery of vaccines.
- There is a need for greater public promotion that community pharmacies can provide funded Boostrix vaccinations. The funding only came about in 2022 so it can take some time for the message to get through communities. The marketing should be in several forms, including TV, radio, social media, posters, handouts, etc., much like what is being created for influenza and Covid-19. This marketing could focus solely on hapū māmā or other eligible populations too, so that the spread of pertussis is reduced.
- There seems to still be a lack of understanding from pregnant people on the importance of the Boostrix vaccination, which highlights the need of focused marketing on pertussis and the dangers of pertussis to babies, with clear resources made available to all health professionals that look after pregnant people, as well as promotions in baby magazines, online groups, Instagram/Tik Tok/Facebook influencers, Parent Centre, Plunket, anti-natal classes, etc.
- There is a large amount of vaccination fatigue throughout the country and public perception that they are being told what to do. Some members of the public may not see the importance of vaccination against pertussis and not believe in vaccinations, especially if they still caught Covid-19 after receiving Covid-19 vaccinations and being told that they would not get sick, so there needs to be a change in the messaging/narrative.

Practical and/or administrative barriers:

- There is still a lack of understanding by community pharmacy that they must order the funded Boostrix vaccine through the CIR and the process to set up access to the CIR, versus access to the unfunded Boostrix vaccine through wholesalers (different pack sizes have caused confusion too).
- In some regions it can take some time for a community pharmacy to be registered on the CIR so that they can order the funded Boostrix vaccine, and some pharmacists have asked if they can use the single Boostrix pack for a funded patient as they can obtain this pack size faster. Could there be another way that Te Whatu Ora could bulk register all pharmacies onto the CIR to assist in this process?

- There is a need to utilise the Book My Vaccine or CCCM platform or another booking system to book the pregnant person in to get their Boostrix vaccination when they present to the pharmacy to have their folic acid and iodine tablets dispensed. Then this can allow follow up by the pharmacy team and continuing care to the pregnant person, which could be incentivised, much like with other health professionals, for the community pharmacy to follow up on the pregnant person to ensure they receive their recommended vaccinations.
- There is still a large population of provisional pharmacist vaccinators in community pharmacy who cannot administer the Boostrix vaccine and are currently focusing on providing influenza and Covid-19 vaccinations. As the Boostrix vaccination is opportunistic and is not a common vaccine to administer there may not be enough incentive for a provisional pharmacist vaccinator to upskill and become authorised so that they can provide the Boostrix vaccine and other vaccines.

Other considerations:

- Has Te Whatu Ora considered sending out a survey, either directly or via the sector groups, to ask vaccinating pharmacies why they are not providing Boostrix vaccinations and what the barriers are?
- Has Te Whatu Ora considered identifying certain populations of pregnant people who have lower uptake of the Boostrix vaccine and speak to specific organisations linked to these populations that would be able to educate them on the importance of Boostrix vaccinations?
- Has Te Whatu Ora considered speaking to the New Zealand College of Midwives to assist in encouraging uptake of the Boostrix vaccine by pregnant people in community pharmacy?
- Has Te Whatu Ora considered working with the Immunisation Coordinators around the country to go into community pharmacies that are not providing the Boostrix vaccination service and supporting them to take up this service?

Thank you for your consideration of our response. If you have any questions about our feedback, please contact our Senior Advisory Pharmacists, Martin Lowis (martin@pgnz.org.nz, 04 802 8218) or Cathy Martin (cathy@pgnz.org.nz, 04 802 8214).

Yours sincerely,



Nicole Rickman

General Manager – Membership and Professional Services