SAND abstract number 223 from the BEACH program 2014–15

Subject: Pneumococcal vaccination in general practice patients 2014

Organisation collaborating for this study: bioCSL (Australia) Pty Ltd

Issues: The proportion of general practice patients with risk factors for pneumococcal vaccination and the type of risk factors they had; the proportion of patients who received a pneumococcal vaccine; reasons for not vaccinating against pneumococcal.

Sample: 2,718 patients aged 15+ years from 103 GPs; data collection period: 06/05/2014 – 09/06/2014.


Summary of results

The age and sex distributions of the 2,718 respondents aged 15 years and over did not differ from the age and sex distributions of patients at all 2013–14 BEACH encounters. Of 2,718 respondents, over half had at least one risk factor for pneumococcal disease (52.1%) and there was no significant difference between males and females in this proportion. More than one-third (36.1%) of all respondents were at risk due to age (65+ years), 13.8% had chronic heart disease, 11.7% had diabetes, 9.9% had chronic lung disease, 8.5% were tobacco smokers, 3.4% had chronic renal failure, 2.7% had immune deficiency and 2.0% had chronic liver disease.

Patients are eligible for a free dose of the pneumococcal vaccine under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) when they turn 65 years old. Recent changes to the NIP mean that patients aged 70 years and over need an additional risk factor (other than age) to be eligible for a second free dose of the vaccine. In this study 62.8% of patients aged 70 years and over had an additional risk factor.

Of 2,673 respondents, 739 (27.6%) had been vaccinated against pneumococcal infection in the previous five years, 68.1% had not, and 4.3% did not know whether they had been vaccinated. Of 1,408 respondents who had at least one risk factor for pneumococcal infection, 51.4% were currently vaccinated and 44.3% were not. Of the patients aged 65-69 years, 49.2% had been vaccinated, 48.5% had not and 2.3% did not know. For patients aged 70 years or more, 70.3% were currently vaccinated, 26.1% were not, and 3.6% did not know. For patients aged 70 and over with at least one additional risk factor, 75.1% had been vaccinated, 21.1% had not, and 3.8% did not know.

Among the 1,819 patients who had not been vaccinated against pneumococcal infection in the previous five years, 1,703 responded to the question on why they were not vaccinated: 72.9% were assessed by the GP as not being at risk of pneumococcal infection, 9.2% of patients objected to the vaccination, 3.5% of patients cited cost as the reason, and 2.8% of patients disagreed with the risk assessment. There were 254 patients (14.9%) who indicated other reasons, including: patient had not been assessed; patient was unaware of the vaccine; patient had been vaccinated twice already; and some patients were to receive the vaccine at the current encounter or would soon be vaccinated.

Correspondence to: Christopher Harrison, FMRC