

Boost your seasonal flu vaccination income

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This enhanced service requires GPs to vaccinate vulnerable groups of patients and certain health and social care staff.

At a typical practice of 5,000 patients, achieving 100% coverage of all target patients would provide income of approximately £10,000.

Key points

- So many people are eligible for vaccination it is worth changing the greeting message on the practice phone to include a reminder.
- There are nine main target groups, covering age, health status and occupation.
- You order the vaccines directly from the pharmaceutical company. Practices can cut their costs by negotiating decent discounts.

This directed enhanced service requires GPs to vaccinate those aged 65 years and over, pregnant women, patients aged six months up to 65 years who are considered 'at risk', carers and locum GPs. Primary school children up to and including year five (age 10) may be immunised by school nursing services.

The 2018/19 seasonal influenza campaign was the most complicated to date, with the over-65s age group given the adjuvanted trivalent influenza vaccine (aTIV) and 18-65s a quadrivalent influenza vaccine (QIVe). Those aged 9-18 years who fall into at-risk groups (such as those with diabetes, asthma or immuno-compromised patients) are given the live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV).

For 2019/20 NHS England has announced that another new quadrivalent vaccine – QIVc – can be used in any eligible patients aged nine upwards.

In 2017/18, 1.5 million people were immunised. In the 2018/19 season the aim was for 75% of all at-risk cohorts to be covered. Note that only 40% of vaccines were released in September, with 20% in October, and a further 40% in November, and practices experienced additional supply problems.

Vaccine ordering varies. It is possible to submit orders a year ahead but the changes for 2018/19 caught some practices out. The latest guidance recommending QIVc for the 2019/20 season came out in January 2019.

The target groups for seasonal influenza are:

- 65 years or over during the flu season.
- Morbidly obese.
- Patients with chronic respiratory disease (COPD or asthma requiring inhaled or oral steroids), chronic heart disease, chronic kidney disease, chronic liver disease, chronic neurological illness.
- Patients with diabetes, immunosuppression or learning disabilities.
- Pregnant women.
- Residents in institutional care.
- In receipt of carers allowance.
- A health and social care worker in a registered home or agency or employee of a voluntary hospice.
- Locum GPs (at the practice they are registered with as a patient).

What is it worth to practices?

The fee for administering a seasonal influenza vaccine is £10.06. The vaccine needs to be pre-ordered directly from the pharmaceutical company – this means practices can cut their costs if they negotiate decent discounts. This involves liaising with drugs reps as early as January for the following winter. Bulk buying can attract discounts and there are buyer groups, such as those run by LMCs, which can help.

The vaccine reimbursement is claimed back from NHS prescription services (NHS Business Services Authority). With careful negotiation and swift claiming it is possible to get the reimbursement before paying the original invoice.

How to claim and ensure payment

Practices must be signed up as delivering the service or ‘accepting a quality service’ on CQRS (Calculating Quality Reporting System) in order for payments to be made. These data are extracted via GPES (General Practice Extraction Service) run by NHS Digital.

Payments will be made monthly. Check the Open Exeter statement every month to ensure all the claims made correspond to monies received and make sure that any errors are chased up swiftly. Any problems should be addressed initially with the commissioner (which is the CCG if delegated co-commissioning or NHS England otherwise), and CQRS and GPES errors can also be pursued via NHS Digital.

How to maximise coverage

- Run big conveyor-belt clinics to get people through fast and early (and beat the pharmacists).
 - Book patients directly to clinics by phoning the target groups.
 - Leave messages on the right-hand side of prescriptions (many of these patients are on repeat prescriptions).
 - Put posters up in the waiting room from August onwards.
 - Change the greeting message on the practice phone to include a reminder.
 - Advertise in the local paper (in conjunction with other surgeries this may be cost effective).
 - Take the vaccine on home visits to known target patients (phone ahead).
 - Don't forget the less obvious groups. Good coding for pregnant women and co-operation with midwives helps, and make sure the under-18 at-risks are coded.
 - Match appointments to vaccine availability and try and use it as fast as possible (it beats the pharmacists and clears space in the fridge).
 - Remember to code the refusers, as this helps with QOF targets, further boosting practice income.
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Guide URL:

<http://preview.pulse-intelligence.co.uk/guide/enhanced-service-seasonal-influenza/>



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