

8 February 2019

ATAGI Secretariat
Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)
Immunisation Branch
GPO Box 9848 – MDP 13
Canberra ACT 2601
Via email: atagi.secretariat@health.gov.au

Dear Secretariat,

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) thanks the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed changes to the use of pertussis vaccines in pregnant women.

The RACGP agrees with the proposed changes from ATAGI. Expanding the vaccination period provides more opportunities for GPs to confirm that pregnant patients are immunised, and that preterm babies are better protected. It also provides an opportunity to link the provision of the vaccine to an early antenatal visit, thus simplifying care, and allowing further time for the vaccine to take effect.

Implementation recommendations

It is important that the changes are widely communicated and implemented effectively, with a notification to all relevant stakeholders.

In addition to the changes to the Australian Immunisation Handbook, the RACGP suggests that a modification should be made to the Shared Care Management Guidelines. The antenatal care schedule (sent to the GP, along with the letter of acceptance) could include the changes to the pertussis vaccines, highlighted in a different colour.

The benefits of earlier vaccination should be clearly communicated.

For example:

- Earlier administration of the vaccine ensures higher antibody levels are achieved in neonates, providing better protection
- There is no significant risk to the fetus or the mother
- An earlier vaccine provides coverage should there be a preterm delivery
- The vaccine needs to be repeated for each pregnancy.



RACGP

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

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Finally, a more concise document from ATAGI on the rational for the changes would be useful resource.

The RACGP thanks ATAGI again for the opportunity to provide comment on this consultation. Should you want to discuss this matter further, please contact Su San Mok, Program Manager for Quality Care on (03) 8669-0302 or via su.mok@racgp.org.au.

Yours sincerely

Dr Harry Nespolon
President