

3 October 2017

Dr Stewart Jessamine
Chair
Medicines Classification Committee
Medsafe
Ministry of Health

Dear Stewart,

Reclassification of the influenza vaccine for registered nurses

As the Medicines Classification Committee will be aware, registered nurses can only administer the influenza vaccine if a medical practitioner has either written a prescription or has a standing order in place. Alternatively, Section 44A of the Medicines Regulations 1984 enables registered nurses to administer vaccines as an authorised vaccinator without the need for a prescription if this is given as part of an approved immunisation programme by a medical officer of health, for example influenza vaccination in workplace settings.

There are issues associated with the supply of the influenza vaccine for vaccinator training and clinical assessment due to the prescription only status of the vaccine when administered by a registered nurse who is an authorised vaccinator in occupational settings. This causes delays in authorisation and can have a significant impact on the delivery of the annual influenza vaccination programme, especially when large volumes are delivered in a very short period of time.

I am therefore writing to request the Medicines Classification Committee to consider extending the current reclassification of the influenza vaccine for pharmacists to include registered nurses. The aim is to increase the access and convenience of obtaining an influenza vaccination, in order to increase uptake by the general population and reduce the burden of influenza.

Influenza vaccine when administered by a registered nurse (as with pharmacists) under this reclassification would be classified as a prescription medicine; except when administered to a person 13 years of age or over by a registered nurse who has successfully completed a vaccinator training course approved by the Ministry of Health and who is complying with the Immunisation Standards of the Ministry of Health.

This reclassification would remove the need to use of Section 44A of the Medicines Regulations 1984, and will enable Registered Nurses with the appropriate vaccinator training, to provide influenza vaccine in an agile and responsive manner. This rationale aligns with the Pharmacists Vaccinator reclassification and also reduces the administrative burden associated with Section 44A on health professionals.

Please let me know if you need any more information

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C McElnay', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Caroline McElnay
Director of Public Health
Protection, Regulation and Assurance