

Media Release

GSK pledges extra 360,000 flu vaccine doses for NZ winter

Pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline has sourced a further 360,000 doses of influenza vaccine for New Zealand from its southern hemisphere network.

The 360,000 doses which contain the recommended strength for all three strains of influenza identified by the World Health Organisation are in addition to the 8000 announced yesterday, and will be available in New Zealand in early May.

GSK has been the reliable supplier of subsidised influenza vaccine to New Zealand for the past seven years without incident. The contract for this year was awarded to Merck Sharp and Dohme for a product sourced from French company Sanofi-Pasteur. The Sanofi product is effective against two of the three influenza strains identified by the World Health Organisation, and partially effective against a third.

PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says the latest commitment from GSK is great news.

“We are planning to start our influenza vaccine programme in April and this news increases the options we have available for protecting patients from influenza. The Ministry of Health is developing a strategy to give people influenza protection using a range of vaccines.

“This is great news and we are delighted that GSK has been able to pull out all the stops to obtain these extra vaccines for New Zealand,” Dr Moodie says. “This has been a terrific effort on its part.”

“Effectively this means we will have more than half a million doses of vaccine which meets the WHO requirements. In addition, the Sanofi product will be available and offers some protection, particularly for the well population.

Influenza vaccine details:

- 50,000 from Solvay Pharmaceuticals
- 100,000 doses from CSL Australia
- 368,000 from GlaxoSmithKline

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Lisa Bright, Vice President and Managing Director of GSKNZ says, “We acknowledge that this has been an incredibly difficult situation for the Government. Although we were not awarded the influenza contract for this season, we are delighted that we can help and that New Zealanders most in need will have access to a fully effective flu vaccine this winter”.

Dr Moodie says GSK will not be distributing these vaccines in New Zealand. PHARMAC will be working with distributors to ensure the vaccine reaches vaccinators and patients.

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