

PRESS RELEASE

Vaccines for Life

Minister for Health launches new Irish vaccines publication to mark World Immunisation Week

Leading healthcare professionals urge people to get the facts when it comes to vaccination

Thursday 27th April 2017

World Immunisation Week was marked today at the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, (RCPI), by Minister for Health, Simon Harris T.D., who launched a new publication, *Vaccines for Life*, on behalf of the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA).

The publication discusses the importance, benefits, safety and future of vaccines, for all stages of life. Vaccines are universally accepted as one of the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions available¹. Up to 3 million lives are saved each year and a further three-quarters of a million more protected from the devastating consequences of vaccine-preventable diseases².

High vaccination rates are necessary to sustain the protection of individuals and wider population³, as much in Ireland as around the world.

The publication also aims to address some of the myths about vaccines. Knowing the facts provides people with the first step towards protecting themselves, their families and the public.

Speaking at the launch, **Minister Harris** said:

“Vaccines save lives, there is no doubt. But we also know that we have a problem with those who wish to scaremonger and misinform when it comes to vaccination. Uptake of the HPV vaccine has fallen to a worrying 50% and there is no doubt that this is related to this scaremongering and misinformation. I take my advice on vaccinations from the Chief Medical Officer, from the European Medicines Agency, from the World Health Organisation and the

¹ World Health Organisation. WHO Global health days. http://www.who.int/campaigns/immunization-week/2013/campaign_essentials/en/

² World Health Organisation. Media Centre. Immunisation Coverage Fact Sheet. Reviewed March 2017. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs378/en/>

³ HSE National Immunisation Office. ‘Your child’s immunisation; A guide for parents for children born on or after the 1st July 2016.’

medical community – not from random social media accounts. If people want to give medical advice on vaccinations, they should become doctors. If not, they need to get out of the way and stay away from our public health policy. We have vaccines in this country that can prevent death. We have a vaccine that can prevent girls from dying of cancer and yet we have uninformed nonsense interfering with medical efforts to save lives. We must not leave young girls exposed to the very real and unnecessary risk of developing cervical cancer at a later stage in life”.

Also speaking at the launch, **Professor Kingston Mills** of the **School of Biochemistry and Immunology at Trinity College Dublin** said: *“Vaccines are crucial in preventing infectious disease. They have eradicated smallpox and polio is soon to follow. Unfortunately, there appears to be an increasing amount of misinformation on the safety of certain vaccines. Much of this is being spread through social media and dedicated websites and is often not based on scientific facts. This appears to have gained some traction, as demonstrated in the alarming drop in the uptake of the human HPV vaccine that protects against cervical cancer. It is incumbent on all of us to assess the benefit versus risks and this should be based on sound scientific evidence. ”.*

Dr Brenda Corcoran from the **National Immunisation Office**, added: *“Immunisation is a simple, safe and effective way of protecting against certain diseases. However, the benefits of vaccination are not seen unless there are high vaccine uptake rates, so it is essential we continue to build and maintain vaccine confidence.”*

Ireland provides one of the most comprehensive childhood immunisation schedules in Europe: HSE’s National Immunisation Guidelines recommend vaccines for each life stage. Each of these are reviewed and recommended by a specialist committee of expert healthcare professionals, NIAC, the national immunisation advisory committee, for addition to the national schedule.

The science behind vaccination is also developing and growing: there are currently over 250 future vaccines in development around the world⁴. The publication advocates for long-term partnership and collaboration between industry and policy makers to ensure existing and future vaccines are made available in Ireland.

Copies of *Vaccines for Life* can be ordered from amybrophy@ipha.ie or downloaded [here](#)

⁴ PhRMA. 2016 Update: Vaccines in Development. <http://phrma-docs.phrma.org/sites/default/files/pdf/medicines-in-development-drug-list-vaccines.pdf>

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Notes for Editors

About IPHA

The Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA) represents the international research based pharmaceutical industry in Ireland. Our members include both manufacturers of prescription medicines and non-prescription or consumer health care medicines.

IPHA engages with national policy so that the healthcare needs of patients are met with valued, innovative medicines.

About World Immunisation Week

Driven by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the aim of World Immunisation Week, 24-30 April 2017, is to raise awareness of the importance of following recommended immunisation schedules for each stage of life and the role of vaccination in helping achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal.

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