

Title:

The Evidence for Childhood Influenza Immunisation: should children be immunised?

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Abstract:

The Western Australian Government began a campaign in 2008 to promote the influenza vaccine free to children 6 months to 5 years of age. A decision to include another vaccine on the childhood immunization schedule should be based upon accurate scientific knowledge not a fear campaign. This paper investigates the evidence being used to promote this vaccine. It also examines the ethics of adding another vaccine to the crowded childhood schedule. Methodology involved a literature review of Health Department documents and medical journals to examine the evidence being used to develop immunization policies. This research finds that influenza is not a serious risk for most children. It also finds evidence that inactivated flu vaccine is ineffective in children under 2 years of age – the age of most complications. It concludes that it is inappropriate and unethical to add another vaccine to the childhood schedule if the majority of children are not at serious risk from this disease and if the vaccine is not proven to be effective. The promotion of this vaccine to the public in WA has been based on a fear campaign and not scientific evidence. There is much debate about the use of multiple vaccines in children and authorities should select carefully the vaccines that are recommended to children and adults.