

## Global Pharmacovigilance

### The Safety of COVID-19 Vaccination in Children and Pregnancy in LMICs Working Group Meeting

Minutes of the above meeting held on **Weds 29<sup>th</sup> June**, 10.00 UTC (11.00am BST) via Zoom.

#### Present

Ryan Walker (Chair), Abduljebar Kadir, Akbar Jaya, Alemayehu Duga, Brightness Musazil, Dorothy Aywak, Eman Sobh, Eric Battey, Florah Matlala, Kennedy Mumba, Loveness Issangya, Manal Younus, Michelo Banda, Miguel Caetano, Nugusa Akawak, Roger Paluku Hamuli, Ruchika Gallani, Sahithi Bogireddy, Shesmu Umer Hussien, Shivangi Srivastava

*Attendee list only includes attendees that were present for a minimum 50% of the allotted meeting time (30 mins)*

#### Agenda

##### 1 Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

###### **Notification of Pregnancy and Children/Adolescents Working Group Merger.**

Attendees were informed of the decisions made at the previous meetings of the formerly separate 'Safety of COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy in LMICs' and 'Safety of COVID-19 Vaccination in Children in LMICs' working groups, where it was agreed that these two groups would merge to focus their efforts as one group. This was the first meeting of that resultant group, 'The Safety of COVID-19 Vaccination in Children and Pregnancy in LMICs' working group.

###### **Notification of group focus on the theme of 'Communication'.**

Initial discussions of the pre-existing working groups examined particular challenges and barriers within their respective themes. The topics of 'improved vaccine safety information communication', and 'improved vaccine safety awareness', have been previously highlighted. It was agreed amongst the group that effective communication is a key driver of improved vaccine safety awareness, and this group will therefore focus its initial efforts on vaccine safety communication, with particular reference to COVID-19 vaccination in children and pregnancy.

###### **Notification of aim to plan a series of online training sessions.**

Attendees were informed of the proposal to plan a series of online training sessions, centring around vaccine safety communication, but with particular reference to COVID-19 vaccination in children and pregnancy. This would involve inviting experts and those with experience in this area to provide short talks that will form a series of informational and training videos. Group Members have already been invited to reach out to relevant individuals.

## 2 Discussion

### **Agreement of merged group on 'communication' as a topic for focus**

Communication was agreed by all members of this new group to be an important topic for focus. It was acknowledged that fear and misinformation relating to vaccination in children and pregnant women is common, and effective communication is an essential tool to combat this. And build trust in healthcare systems. Specifically, it was agreed that 'grassroots level' (face-to-face communication between healthcare professionals and the general public) was a key area for focus.

### **Specific aspects of communication for focus**

There was a strong consensus amongst the group that tailoring scientific communications to the intended audience, taking into account factors such as literacy levels (both functional and scientific), local languages and culture (engaging local leaders, mythology and local customs etc.) is of high importance, and this will be an important area of focus for this group. It was noted that this is especially important when engaging rural communities.

It was also acknowledged that providing the 'full picture' regarding vaccination to the general public is a challenge. To this end, it is important that Healthcare Professionals are not just aware of safety considerations, but also factors such as how the vaccine works, evidence on the benefits of vaccination, and the evidence behind vaccination policies and dosing regimens.

### **Experience from Zambia and India**

M. Kennedy shared their experiences from Zambia, on communication with adolescents regarding COVID-19 Vaccination:

- It is important to engage with the patient (adolescent), and not just the parent.
- Communication should be targeted and tailored towards children, and adolescents.
- There has been successful outreach work in schools, involving teachers in adolescent vaccinations. Vaccination consent forms have been provided to children at school, to take home for their parents to sign. These are then return these to school the next day and collected by the teachers.
- Peer-to-peer communications (adolescent-adolescent) is an important tool to harness. This has included involving Community Adolescent Journalists, Adolescents who act as a contact point for media organisations and discuss the importance of vaccination.
- Engaging religious leaders and organisations to disseminate accurate vaccine information to the community has been a successful approach.
- There is a need to generate more materials (posters/flyers) regarding vaccination in local languages, to provide more evidence to the public.

S. Bogireddy shared their experiences from India, on communication with adolescents regarding COVID-19 Vaccination:

- There does not appear to be a particular strategy employed to communicate vaccine information to adolescents in particular.
- Social media is employed heavily, and is used to share government promotional materials.
- It is common to see vaccination information/promotion in shopping malls, restaurants, movies theatres and when travelling.
- The strategy appears to be 'top-down' communication (from Health ministries) as opposed to grassroots level.

### **Online Informational/Training Videos Plans: Proposed Format**

It was proposed that a series of short videos (opposed to one longer, multi-speaker session) would be a suitable format, to allow time to plan upcoming videos, finalise topics and identify speakers. Presenting several topics at the same time may 'overload' people with information. It was agreed that shorter sessions would also make the information more accessible to future stakeholders, (the topics of each session will be clearer, the information will be easier to find when online, and the shorter sessions are more the 'watchable' for those with limited time). The final format will depend upon the number of desired sessions (currently, 5 have been proposed)

### **Suggestions for Informational/Training Video Topics**

See below

### **Other Areas for Focus**

E. Sobh raised that variations in national vaccination policies (e.g. frequency of vaccine dosing, varying childhood vaccination policies) can cause uncertainty and reduce confidence in vaccination programmes. It was agreed that this could be an area of further investigation for this group.

### **Working Group Webpages**

An online space is in development for this group. This will act as an online point of reference, provide a dissemination point for group output and increase the group's visibility to other pharmacovigilance stakeholders. A draft of these webpages was shared with the group. Once the pages are finalised, they will be shared with the group.

### **The Global Health Network Conference**

The group was informed of the upcoming Global Health Network Conference 2022. It was agreed that this group could submit an abstract in preparation for this conference regarding the training session plans.

### 3 Set Action Points for Next Meeting

- **R. Walker** to disseminate meeting minutes
- **R. Walker** to disseminate draft proposal of training session topics. **All members** to review suggestions and contribute further ideas.
- **R. Walker** to share link to TGHN conference, and group to submit an abstract regarding group activities.
- **E. Sobh** to share draft proposal of research into variations in national vaccination policies.

### 4 Agree date and time of the next meeting

This was not discussed at the meeting, however the next group meeting will be in approximately one month's time (w/c 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022, exact date to be decided closer to the time).

## Appendix: Proposed Training/Informational Session Topics

<p><b>Why receive the COVID-19 Vaccination?</b> What are the benefits of vaccination? Why is it important for those who are not yet vaccinated to get vaccinated? Why is it important to receive all doses of the vaccine?</p>
<p><b>COVID-19 Vaccination Misinformation: Myths, Misconceptions and Fake News</b> A session on common topics of misinformation relating to COVID-19 vaccination, and how these can be challenged.</p>
<p><b>Adverse Effects of COVID-19 Vaccines: A Focus on LMICs</b> A session on adverse effects of COVID-19 vaccination specific to adverse events detected in LMICs.</p>
<p><b>COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy: What are the Facts?</b> A session on the uptake, risk/benefit, safety, and special considerations of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy.</p>
<p><b>COVID-19 Vaccination in Children/Adolescents: What are the Facts?</b> A session on the uptake, risk/benefit, safety, and special considerations of COVID-19 vaccination in Children/Adolescents.</p>
<p><b>Identifying Trusted Vaccine Information</b> A session on how to identify reliable sources of vaccine information, and an overview of specific source examples.</p>
<p><b>Effective use of Social Media in Vaccine Safety Communication</b> A session on the value of social media in science/vaccine communication, the potential risks and pit falls, and how to use social media effectively to share information and tackle misinformation.</p>
<p><b>Measuring Results of Improved Communications</b> A session on assessing the impact of communication strategies</p>
<p><b>Identifying Loopholes in Communication Programmes</b> A session on identifying gaps in communications strategies, including which groups aren't being reached, and what further channels can be harnessed.</p>
<p><b>Experience Session: Communicating Vaccine safety Issues.</b> A session from a community member (e.g. researcher, HCP, regulator) on their experience of vaccine safety information communication during the pandemic, and ideally with a focus on children and pregnancy.</p>
<p><b>Vaccine Safety Communications for Healthcare Officials</b> A session aimed towards those working in Ministries of Health.</p>

**Communication Strategies for Adolescent Vaccination**

A session on how to tailor communication strategies towards adolescents.

**Tailoring Scientific Communication to the General Public**

A session on how to tailor scientific communication, specifically vaccine safety communication, to the general public, with a particular focus on local languages, literacy levels, and local culture.