

3.5 Deputy K.C. Lewis of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the onward sale of unused Swine Flu vaccines:

Further to news that the United Kingdom is to sell on 60 million doses of swine flu vaccine with France and Germany also selling on, is the Minister concerned about the take up of vaccine in Jersey?

Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The answer is no. Our vaccine up-take appears to be exceptional in comparison with other jurisdictions. We are not aware of anywhere else where over 85 per cent of children have been protected by vaccine and over 80 per cent of people with existing medical conditions that place them at high risk of a more serious effect of H1N1 swine flu. So far almost 40 per cent of our population overall has had the vaccine and it continues to be on offer free of charge by G.P.s (General Practitioners) to anyone who may wish it. The surplus vaccine situation in the U.K., France and Germany, and here in Jersey but on a much smaller scale, is simply because we all purchased 2 doses of the H1N1 vaccine per head of population to be vaccinated. This was in line with the dosage schedule recommended originally by the manufacturers and endorsed by the world health authorities. The revision of this advice in autumn 2009 as evidence of lasting effectiveness of the vaccine confirmed that one dose was enough to give protection to the majority of the population. It automatically created a surplus equivalent to half of all the vaccine we had contracts for. Much of the Western World including the U.S. (United States) and Canada also have surplus, in most cases to a greater proportionate degree than Jersey as we have achieved vaccine up-take in our population higher than we have heard anywhere reported.

3.5.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The Minister stated that one vaccination seemed to be enough but many people were given 2, including children, is the Minister aware that I have been contacted by quite a few aggrieved parents who have been told that if they wish their children to attend nursery they must have their children vaccinated with the follow-up booster? Would the Minister care to comment?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I understand the parents' concerns and before the department went on to the vaccination programme it held many public meetings as well as the Pandemic Hub, which was there to answer any parents' questions or even just observations or however simple it might mean. In that hub there was immediate access to the consultant microbiologist, the Medical Officer of Health (M.O.H.), the consultant paediatrician as well as the consultant in respiratory diseases as well as a lot of information sent out through the media with the M.O.H. having regular updates with them. Those children are what we call our super-spreaders because they have not built up an immunity and to get them vaccinated as soon as possible was very important as part of our pandemic structure. I would just like to say 16,000 school children were vaccinated over a period of 6 days and I think that is absolutely remarkable.

3.5.2 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I thank the Minister for her reply. Can the Minister inform the Assembly when the approximate expiry date is for the vaccines and what are her intentions for it thereafter?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I have 2 different expiry dates, they are in 2012 and the other one is a similar expiry date. It is here somewhere, and because I want to be absolutely clear, perhaps during the next question that can be mentioned but also I would like to mention that the adjuvant in the vaccine has got a longer shelf life and that we can hang on to that bit.