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SUWASIRIPAYA

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Date 29/11/2010

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Ministry of Health

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385, Rev. Baddegama Wimalawansa Thero Mawatha, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka.

General Circular No. 01 - 44/2010

Provincial/ Regional Directors of Health Services,
Directors of Teaching Hospitals/ Specialized Campaigns,
M.SS / D.M.OO, of Provincial/ Base Hospitals,
Heads of Decentralized Units,
Regional Epidemiologists / Medical Officers (MCH),
Medical Officers of Health.

**Reintroduction of rubella vaccine into the Expanded Programme
on Immunization (EPI)**

Rubella is a viral infection which will have dreadful consequences to the foetus if contracted during pregnancy. The resulting Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) would carry serious health, social and economic implications.

Rubella vaccine was introduced in to the EPI programme in 1996 with the objective of preventing CRS by immunizing females in the child bearing age. In subsequent years, with the shifting of objectives to prevent rubella infection, the target group was expanded to include both males and females. By the time rubella vaccine was temporarily suspended in 2009 consequent to two deaths due to anaphylactic shock following vaccination against rubella, the target groups for the vaccine were:

- All children at the age of 13 years (school children in grade 8, during school medical inspections)
- Females in child bearing age (16-44 yrs) at field clinics or hospital immunization clinics.

Consequent to the temporary suspension, assessments conducted on the quality and the safety profile of the particular batch of rubella vaccine in Sri Lanka and overseas WHO accredited laboratories have revealed that the vaccine was in conformity with the accepted international standards.

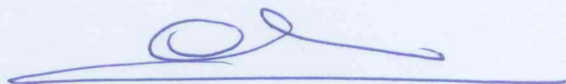
Taking into consideration the reports of the investigating committees, the findings on the safety profile of the vaccine and also the fact that rubella vaccine is a WHO pre-qualified vaccine, the National Advisory Committee on Communicable Diseases, at its meeting held on 4th June 2010, has decided to reintroduce rubella vaccine into the EPI programme.

The guidelines on reintroduction of rubella vaccine into the EPI programme are as follows.

- Immunization with rubella vaccine can be commenced on demand for all males and females aged 13 years and above, at immunization clinic sessions conducted by MOH offices or hospitals. Immunization with rubella vaccine will not commence as part of a school health programme.

- Those with a history of food or drug allergy should not be immunized at a field clinic. Children or adults with a history of food or drug allergy should be immunized in the central immunization clinic at the MOH office or in a hospital immunization clinic in the presence of a Medical Officer and with the availability of the emergency tray, as instructed by the DGHS in his letter on "Further Guidelines on Implementation of Immunization Programme" dated 23.04.2009. (A copy of the circular is annexed for your easy reference).

- General guidelines on immunization and specific guidelines on rubella immunization outlined in the "Immunization Hand book" published by the Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health should also be adhered to.



Dr. Ajith Mendis
Director General of Health Services

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