

10<sup>th</sup> August 2018

## **The Annual Influenza Immunisation Programme: Consideration of the annual starting date**

**FEEDBACK FROM**

New Zealand College of Midwives

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The New Zealand College of Midwives is the professional organisation for midwifery. Members are employed and self-employed and collectively represent 90% of the practising midwives in this country. There are around 2,900 midwives who hold an Annual Practising Certificate (APC). These midwives provide maternity care to, on average, 60,000 women and babies each year. New Zealand has a unique and efficient maternity service model which centres care around the needs of the woman and her baby.

Midwives undertake a four year equivalent undergraduate degree to become registered. The undergraduate curriculum meets all international regulatory and education standards. Midwives are authorised prescribers in relation to their Scope of Practice as determined by the Midwifery Council.

Midwives provide an accessible and primary health care service for women in the community within a continuity of carer model as Lead Maternity Carers. Midwives can also choose to work within secondary and tertiary maternity facilities, providing essential care to women with complex maternity needs.

The College offers information, education and advice to women, midwives, district health boards, health and social service agencies and the Ministry of Health regarding midwifery and maternity issues. Midwives interface with a multitude of other health professionals and agencies to support women to achieve the optimum outcome for their pregnancies, health and wellbeing.

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10<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Ministry of Health

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### **The Annual Influenza Immunisation Programme: Consideration of the annual start date**

The New Zealand College of Midwives (the College) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the consideration of a start date for the annual influenza immunisation programme. The College recognises that the prevention of influenza during pregnancy is an essential part of antenatal care due to the increased risk of serious illness in pregnant women and newborn infants.

The College supports the Ministry's preferred option to start the influenza immunisation programme on 1<sup>st</sup> April each year. We support a standardised start to the immunisation programme for consistency reasons. As the influenza season is considered to have a start time in May and evidence indicates that seroconversion occurs between four to six weeks post-vaccination<sup>1</sup>, the April start should still provide good cover.

The College notes that the Royal Australasian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) in their 'Influenza vaccination during pregnancy (and in women planning pregnancy)' statement, recommend unvaccinated women be offered immunisation at any time during the influenza season as long as the supplies of vaccine last (Recommendation 2).<sup>2</sup> The College supports this recommendation.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Best regards

Carol Bartle

Policy Analyst

New Zealand College of Midwives

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<sup>1</sup> Mak, T. K., Mangtani, P., Leese, J., Watson, J. M., & Pfeifer, D. (2008). Influenza vaccination in pregnancy: current evidence and selected national policies. *The Lancet infectious diseases*, 8(1):44-52.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ranzcog.edu.au/RANZCOG\\_SITE/media/RANZCOG-MEDIA/Women%27s%20Health/Statement%20and%20guidelines/Clinical-Obstetrics/Influenza-vaccination-in-pregnancy-\(C-Obs-45\)-Review-March-2017.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://www.ranzcog.edu.au/RANZCOG_SITE/media/RANZCOG-MEDIA/Women%27s%20Health/Statement%20and%20guidelines/Clinical-Obstetrics/Influenza-vaccination-in-pregnancy-(C-Obs-45)-Review-March-2017.pdf?ext=.pdf)