

PRESS RELEASE

Swine Flu and the risk of vaccination in allergic patients

Venice, 12 November 2009 – Over 900 experts at the EAACI International Meeting “Pediatric Allergy and Asthma” discussed today the potential threat of the A/H1N1 influenza on allergic and asthmatic patients.

For those people suffering from asthma, a virus infection can be life-threatening. This is particularly true with swine flu, whose potential complications depend heavily on the underlying health of the patient.

Can egg allergic patients be vaccinated against influenzae viruses?

Viruses used to manufacture these flu vaccines are cultivated in embryonic chicken cells, i.e. in fertilised hen eggs. Very small quantities of egg proteins are thus likely to be present in the vaccines.

“In most cases, these traces are not sufficient to cause severe allergic reactions in individuals allergic to egg. However, those that are highly sensitive to egg may be at risk,” said Antonella Muraro, pediatrician and allergist, chairman of the Venice Meeting and member of the Board of Officers of EAACI.

Only some batches of swine flu vaccine are being produced through cell-culture processes avoiding eggs.

EAACI Anti-Flu Vaccination Recommendations

To help solve the problem, EAACI has issued recommendations for health professional distributing seasonal and swine flu influenza vaccination in egg-allergic patients.

The EU law authorizes a maximum of 1 microgram of egg albumin per vaccine. In theory this quantity does not present a danger to individuals allergic to egg.

“However, EAACI recommends that those individuals whose allergy is proven, special precautions consisting of vaccination in a safe environment should be taken,” underlines Prof. Paolo Rossi from Rome, member of the Board of EAACI Section of Pediatrics.

In general, only those patients with a confirmed or suspected allergy to egg ovalbumin and are on a 100 percent egg-free diet, need to be sent to an allergy specialist for vaccination.

According to EAACI:

_ If the patient has a history of egg-induced allergic shock, the risk-benefit of vaccination should be carefully considered.

_ If the history of allergic reactions include isolated urticaria, angioedema, vomiting, asthma or rhinitis, a skin-prick test should be done prior to injection of the vaccine.

Depending on the result, the injection may be divided in two doses, not ne performed at all, or be administered with emergency medication including adrenaline available in case of necessity.



The Venice meeting continues tomorrow, when experts from European and U.S. pediatric societies, including the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology and the National Institute of Health (NIH-USA) will discuss the preliminary results of ongoing clinical trials, as well as new approaches to find a "cure" for allergy.

About EAACI:

EAACI - The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology is a non-profit organisation active in the field of allergic and immunologic diseases such as asthma, rhinitis, eczema, occupational allergy, food and drug allergy and anaphylaxis. EAACI was founded in 1956 in Florence and has become the largest medical association in Europe in the field of allergy and clinical immunology. It includes 5'500 individual members from 107 countries, as well as 40 National Allergy Societies.

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