To: Administrators,  
Departmental Safety Officers and  
Biological Safety Officers

29 August 2017

Dear Colleague

I am writing to advise there is a global shortage of hepatitis B vaccines which is currently impacting severely on the UK supply. Limitations on supply are likely to continue until early 2018. To ensure stock is available for those individuals at highest and most immediate risk of exposure to hepatitis B during the period of constraint Public Health England (PHE) has produced temporary recommendations for vaccine prioritisation and use. The full document can be found at the following link:  - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints.

As a result of these temporary recommendations, the University Occupational Health Service as a non-NHS organisation will not be able to order a stock of adult vaccine until further notice. Following a review of processes, hepatitis B vaccination will therefore be offered on a risk assessment basis to the following priority groups only during this period of constraint:

- Staff / students working with the hepatitis B virus
- Staff / students working with unscreened blood that involves sharps at containment level 3
- Post-exposure needle stick or other sharps injury from known positive source / unknown source

Until supplies are available again, OH will:

- Not commence any primary vaccination courses unless working in a priority group as identified above
- Delay / postpone all routine 5-yr booster vaccinations for staff / students who have completed a primary course and have an antibody level of >100iu/ml which shows an optimal response to the vaccine
- Delay single booster vaccines for those who have completed a primary course and have an antibody level of 10-100iu/ml which shows a detectable response to the vaccine indicating immunity
It is strongly recommended that all staff / students should:

- Continue to follow local / departmental procedures with regards the use of universal precautions to prevent hepatitis B infection and other blood borne viruses. HIV and hepatitis C are not preventable by vaccine but have similar transmission routes.
- In the event that an occupational exposure to human blood and / or body fluid or tissue where there could be risks of transmission is sustained, take the following action immediately:
  - Make the wound bleed under water
  - Wash the wound with soap and water – do not scrub
  - Dry and apply a waterproof dressing
  - Thoroughly wash away any body fluid splash to eyes or mouth
- Report the incident via local departmental reporting process to both supervisor and OH for further assessment and advice. Contact Occupational Health during office hours and the Emergency Department at Addenbrooke’s Hospital out of hours for assessment. Prompt reporting of exposures is important to ensure any risks of infection from an injury are appropriately managed at the time.

The job hazard evaluation form (OHF29) [http://www.oh.admin.cam.ac.uk/oh-forms/job-hazard-evaluation-form](http://www.oh.admin.cam.ac.uk/oh-forms/job-hazard-evaluation-form) is the usual mechanism for notifying OH when an individual will be working with human blood and / or body fluid and tissue. On receipt of this form, if vaccination is not commenced as a result of the current temporary constraints (see flowchart below) OH will advise that a local risk assessment be undertaken (appendix 1).

The risk assessment provides advice on universal precautions / where possible avoiding work on high risk activities out of hours and the action to be taken in the event an incident occurs.


If you have any queries please contact Occupational Health on 01223 (3)36594 for further advice.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr M Vinnell, Director of the Occupational Health & Safety Service
Hepatitis B shortage flow chart

Job hazard evaluation form received in OH

Individual

Working with blood - priority group
Work with HBV
Work with human blood involving sharps at CL3

Working with blood – non-priority group
Laboratory / direct patient contact

No direct contact with human blood / body fluids
Administrative work
Custodians
Lab workers not directly processing samples
First aiders
Bed makers (Colleges)

Action
OH commence primary vaccination course
OH check serology to establish level of immunity and follow up

Action
Vaccination postponed
Individual risk assessment completed by department

Action
Vaccination not indicated
Individual risk assessment completed by department