

Addressing Patient Concerns
About Pig-gelatin in Vaccines

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The Issue

Some patients have dietary, moral, or religious reasons for not consuming pig products. Thus, it is important for them to be aware of any products containing pig additives. As clinicians and administrators, it is equally as important for you to understand how this relates to the vaccines administered under your care.

Eight currently used vaccines are known to be manufactured using gelatin originating from pigs (porcine gelatin). As a service to our customers, Axion Health systematically reviews package inserts prepared by vaccine manufacturers to identify which products contain porcine gelatin.

Solution

Proper awareness by the clinical staff and education of the patient prior to the injection/application can avoid distressed patients and uncomfortable conversations.

For the 2013-2014 season, the following influenza vaccines contain porcine gelatin:

Vaccine

FluMist Quadrivalent¹

Fluzone Quadrivalent²

Fluzone³

Special note: The other Fluzone products (High dose and Intradermal) do NOT contain gelatin or porcine products.

From our research in May 2013, all other influenza vaccines approved for use in 2013-14 are free of porcine gelatin. Of course, we recommend that you check the packaging of other vaccines used by your clinic to reconfirm the absence of porcine gel.

¹ FluMist Quadrivalent® [package insert] Gaithersburg, MD: MedImmune, LLC.; 2013 pg.25

² Fluzone Quadrivalent ® [package insert] Swiftwater, PA: Sanofi Pasteur Inc; 2013 pg. 18

³ Fluzone ® [package insert] Swiftwater, PA: Sanofi Pasteur Inc: 2013 pg.14

In addition to flu vaccines, there are five other vaccines that contain porcine gelatin and carry the same potential concerns with this patient population.

Vaccine	Virus
MMR II	Measles, Mumps, Rubella
ProQuad	Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella
Varivax	Varicella
YF-Vax	Yellow Fever
Zostavax	Herpes Zoster

It's advisable to have your concerned workers/patients vaccinated with a non-porcine containing vaccine or, if none is available, consult with their religious leader.

Because of the importance to public health and infection control, religious leaders have examined the question of whether or not members of their religious order may receive vaccines that contain pig products.

Position of Some Religious Leaders on Porcine Gelatin in Vaccines

Islam. A letter written in July 2001 (See appendix 1), by the Regional Office of the World Health Organization (WHO) for the Eastern Mediterranean, summarized the findings of Islamic legal scholars who met to clarify Islamic purity laws. The scholars met at a 1995 seminar convened by the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences on the topic "The Judicially Prohibited and Impure Substances in Foodstuff and Drugs." A statement from the scholars reads:

"The seminar issued a number of recommendations, included in the attached statement, stipulating that 'Transformation which means the conversion of a substance into another substance, different in characteristics, changes substances that are judicially impure . . . into pure substances, and changes substances that are prohibited into lawful and permissible substances'."⁴

Consequently, the scholars determined that the transformation of pork products into gelatin for the manufacture of vaccines alters them sufficiently for observant Muslims to receive vaccines containing pork gelatin and to take

⁴ World Health Organization (WHO), Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. Statement arising from a seminar held by the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences on 'The judicially prohibited and impure substances in foodstuff and drugs'. 2001. (www.immunize.org/concerns/religious.asp)

medicine packaged in gelatin capsules.

Observant Muslims are advised to contact their religious leader for further guidance.

Judaism. A similar position has been taken by leading Rabbis. An opinion written by Rabbi Abraham Adler of the Kashrus and Medicines Information Service and posted on the Public Health England website said:

“It should be noted that according to Jewish laws, there is no problem with porcine or other animal derived ingredients in non-oral products. This includes vaccines, including those administered via the nose, injections, suppositories, creams and ointments.”⁵

Vegans, vegetarians, and individuals with dietary restrictions

Individuals who avoid pig products may object to vaccines that contain gelatin on a variety of grounds, including moral objections to the killing of animals, avoidance of animal products, dietary preference, or due to a food allergy. In such cases, it will be mostly an individual's personal choice whether or not to accept a vaccine that contains pig gelatin.

⁵ Rabbi Abraham Adler, *Vaccines and gelatin: PHE response*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vaccines-and-gelatine-phe-response>, Accessed: 31 Dec 2013.

Appendix 1

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE
Bureau régional de la Méditerranée orientale



منظمة الصحة العالمية
الكتبة الإيميني شرق المتوسط

FDB.7/3
P6/61/3

17 July, 2001

Dear Dr

It has come to our knowledge that some inquiries were being raised concerning the lawful judgement of using substances taken from animals that it is forbidden to eat, or substances derived from such animals and having undergone chemical transformation, in particular, the gelatin used in the production of drug capsules, which may be derived from some of the organs or tissues of pigs that are subjected to a series of chemical reactions, which ultimately lead to their transformation into gelatin.

In this respect, we would like to draw your kind attention to the fact that the Regional Office of the World Health Organization for the Eastern Mediterranean has participated in 1995 in a seminar held by the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences in Kuwait on "The Judicially Prohibited and Impure Substances in Foodstuff and Drugs". This was attended by one hundred and twelve jurists and experts, headed by their eminencies Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sayed Tantawi (then Mufti of Egypt and presently Sheikh of Al-Azhar), Sheikh Mohammad Al Mokhtar Al Sallami (then Mufti of Tunisia), Sheikh Mohammad Ben Hammad Al Khalili (Mufti of Sultanate of Oman), Sheikh Dr Mohammad Al Habsheh Ben Al Khojah (Secretary-General of the Islamic Fiqh Academy in Jeddah), Dr Youssef Al Qaradawy (Director, Research Centre of Sunna and Mode of Life of the Prophet in Qatar), Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Qabani (Mufti of the Lebanese Government), The Late Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammad Mahdi Shams El Din (then Head of the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council in Lebanon), Judge Sheikh Mohammad Taqi Al Osmani (Head of the Judicial Council in Pakistan), Sheikh Dr Hamed Gam'el (former Deputy of Al-Azhar), Sheikh Dr Khaled Al Mazkour (Head, Shari'a Application Committee in Kuwait), Sheikh Khalil Al Mues (Director of Azhar, Lebanon, and Mufti of Al Bcca'e), Sheikh Dr Ajeel Jassem Al Nashmi (then, Dean of the Faculty of Shari'a in Kuwait), Dr. Mohammad Abdul Ghaffar Al Sherif (present Dean of the Faculty of Shari'a in Kuwait), Dr Wahba Al Zohayli (then, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Shari'a in Damascus), Sheikh Mashaal Mubarak Al Sabah (Director, Department of Legal Opinions in Kuwait), in addition to many others.

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Lee Newman is founding Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-funded Mountain & Plains Education and Research Center (MAP ERC) and a Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health in the Colorado School of Public Health. He is also Professor of Medicine in the Division of Allergy and Clinical Immunology and the Division of Pulmonary Science and Critical Care Medicine, in the School of Medicine, University of Colorado Denver. One of the nation's leading experts in the fields of occupational/environmental medicine and pulmonary medicine, he also co-founded Axion Health (www.axionhealth.com) which provides software, support and consultation services for employee health, occupational health, medical surveillance and emergency preparedness for health systems, hospitals, government agencies and Fortune 500 companies.

About Axion Health.

Axion Health provides clinically-based employee well-being solutions. Its flagship ReadySet™ software optimizes employee well-being and engagement for health systems, government agencies, and industry. It includes solutions for more effective employee health, occupational health, employee safety and wellness. The ReadySet software is web-based, easy to use, HIPAA compliant, and paperless. For more information, please visit www.axionhealth.com.