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Dear Doctors,

Use of Rotavirus Vaccines Resumed

I am writing to inform you that Department of Health (DH) has decided to approve the two rotavirus vaccines, Rotarix by GlaxoSmithKline Plc (GSK) and RotaTeq by Merck & Co, Inc (Merck) to re-enter the market after studying the latest evidence regarding the two vaccines.

The decision followed an examination of the latest information on the two vaccines from various sources including the US, Europe, the World Health Organization and the manufacturers, as well as the local situation. After reviewing scientific literature, it is concluded that the benefits of these vaccines outweigh the risks. DH has concluded that it is now appropriate for doctors to resume the use of the two rotavirus vaccines.

In Hong Kong, both vaccines are registered pharmaceutical products for children six weeks and older against diarrhoea and vomiting due to rotavirus infection. Both were recalled earlier on quality grounds following the identification of fragments of DNA from the pig virus (porcine circovirus, or PCV) in the vaccines in the US.

While PCV is not known to cause infection or illness in humans, both manufacturers will be required to revise labellings in future stocks of the vaccines to include information about the presence of PCV type 1 (Rotarix) and DNA from PCV type 1 and PCV type 2 (RotaTeq) in the vaccines. During the interim period, we recommend that parents be informed about the findings of PCV DNA or PCV in rotavirus vaccines when their children receive these vaccines, and the benefits outweigh the risks.



Please note that a two-dose schedule at two and four months is recommended for Rotarix while a three-dose schedule at two, four and six months is recommended for RotaTeq. According to the product information, the second Rotarix dose should be administered prior to 24 weeks of age and the third RotaTeq dose should not be given after 32 weeks of age.

DH will continue to monitor developments and work with the vaccine manufacturers concerned on the latest information.

Yours sincerely,



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