



Health Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, Chair

Simon Stevens
Chief Executive, NHS England

8 August 2017

Dear Simon,

I am writing to seek clarification of the impact the national review of low value prescribing will have on the NHS's provision of free travel vaccines. It has been brought to my attention that as part of this review the NHS may cease to fund vaccines for overseas travel which protect against, Diphtheria, Polio and Tetanus (DPT), Typhoid, Hepatitis A, and Cholera. I understand that these vaccinations are predominantly provided to people travelling to the Indian sub-continent and Asia.

I am concerned that the public health consequences of altering the availability of travel vaccines may outweigh any financial savings that could be accrued as a result of this measure. I would be grateful, therefore, if you could confirm whether the provision of free travel vaccines is under review and, this being the case, which vaccines are being the reviewed and the timeframe for implementing any potential changes.

Furthermore, outlined below are a number of queries on which I would welcome your response:

- What saving to the public purse could be achieved by ending the provision of free travel vaccines funded by the NHS?
- What assessment has been made of the number of people who may travel without immunisation if free travel vaccinations are no longer funded by the NHS?
- What consideration has been given to the public interpretation of describing travel vaccines as low-value prescription items?
- Would the removal of free NHS travel vaccines be consistent with the UK's historic approach which has operated on the basis of a high level of caution?

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sarah Wollaston MP
Chair of the Committee

OFFICIAL



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Via email: healthcom@parliament.uk

27th September 2017

Dear Dr Wollaston

Thank you for your letter dated 8th August 2017 regarding travel vaccines. On 21st July, NHS England launched a three month consultation on 'items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care'. The consultation includes the following vaccines that currently should not be prescribed on the NHS for the purposes of travel:

- Hepatitis B
- Japanese Encephalitis
- Meningitis ACWY
- Yellow Fever
- Tick-borne encephalitis
- Rabies
- BCG

The consultation does not include the travel vaccines you refer to in your letter; i.e. Diphtheria, Polio and Tetanus (DPT), Typhoid, Hepatitis A, and Cholera.

The items specified in the consultation are not currently commissioned by the NHS for the purposes of travel. For example, Meningitis ACWY is routinely offered to young teenagers and 'fresher' students going to university for the first time, but it should not be administered by the NHS for the purposes of travel alone. However, due to confusion about vaccine eligibility, some people are mistakenly administered this and other vaccines by the NHS for the purposes of travel. This consultation therefore seeks to restate the current policy of the NHS and aims to reduce confusion.

The proposed commissioning guidance, upon which we are consulting, will be addressed to CCGs to support them to fulfil their duties around the appropriate use of prescribing resources. This will need to be taken into account by CCGs in adopting or amending their own local guidance to their clinicians in primary care.

The aim of this consultation is to provide individuals with information about the proposed national guidance and to seek people's views about the proposals. We welcome the views you have provided and will ensure that these are considered as part of the consultation. A number of face to face events and webinars (online events) are also planned during the consultation period and these will be shared on the NHS England website shortly. Further details of the consultation are available through the following links:

<https://www.events.england.nhs.uk/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/mo-dash/medicines-value/>

<https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/consultation/items-routinely-prescribed/>

Given that the vaccines you refer to in your letter are not affected by the consultation, and that the consultation includes vaccines that currently should not be prescribed on the NHS for the purposes of travel I am unable to answer the detailed questions you raise in the letter. However, a parliamentary drop-in session is being organised for early October; the date of this session will be confirmed to your office as soon as it is finalised.

Careful consideration has been given to ensure that particular groups of people are not disproportionately affected, and that principles of best practice on clinical prescribing are adhered to.

NHS England has also asked Public Health England to separately conduct a review of the travel vaccines which you refer to in your letter, and which are currently available on the NHS. This review will assess their appropriateness for prescribing on the NHS. A full assessment of public health consequences of altering the availability of these vaccines will be undertaken, which will include assessment of any disproportionate effect on any groups in the population. Any changes to availability, if proposed, will be subject to further consultation by NHS England.

Yours sincerely *phat wiles*



Simon Stevens
CEO, NHS England