



Travel health update

Travel health can be complicated, and advice for health professionals and travellers is ever-changing. In this regular feature, Jane Chiodini seeks out and presents the latest travel advice and information to help you to keep your practice up to date. She also revisits areas of on-going concern, for spot-checks and further clarification

MALARIA AWARENESS AT HEATHROW AIRPORT

I write this on a day I started working at 6am at Terminal 4 of Heathrow Airport as part of the Malaria Awareness Campaign, organised and sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline Travel Health. The purpose of the exercise was particularly to raise awareness of the symptoms of malaria as a recent survey undertaken with 2,254 members of the general public around the UK revealed that 57% questioned were unaware of the symptoms of malaria. We spent our time handing out malaria awareness leaflets and symptom checker cards to people returning from many malarious destinations coming through arrivals. I've undertaken similar activity at the Bluewater shopping centre and a wedding show at Earl's Court and I think the initiative is to be applauded for the education it provides. A key attraction was a life-size mosquito which did a grand job entertaining the children as they emerged through arrival – he caused much amusement for the travellers and those awaiting passengers at the barrier! Useful websites as part of this campaign are www.malariahotspots.co.uk and www.8weekstogo.co.uk



Raising awareness of malaria and its symptoms is extremely important

SEXUAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Sexual health advice is very important when advising on travel risks and management in a travel health consultation. The Royal College of Nursing has recently launched a new learning tool to help non-experts gain greater knowledge in the subject and develop the skills and attitudes needed to help patients and clients. It also examines issues of emergency contraception, unwanted pregnancy, men's health, sexual assault, sexually transmitted infections and the health needs of vulnerable people, together with the communication skills you will need in practice. The guide also provides signposts for further reading and links to relevant material. Access the resource via www.rcn.org.uk/learningzone

JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS VACCINE RECALL

The end of May saw the recall of a batch of Ixiaro vaccine. Routine stability testing of a

certain batch has shown it may be less potent than expected and may not produce a full protective immune response in recipients. The MHRA has advised that healthcare professionals should consider the need for revaccination of individuals who have received a dose or doses from this batch of vaccine. For further details see http://www.nathnac.org/pro/clinical_updates/ixiarorecall_270511.htm

TRAVEL AND MEASLES

Increasing cases of measles have been reported in Europe as well as in the UK. Foreign travel is an important factor in the international spread of this infectious disease. In the UK a pre-travel health consultation offers the ideal opportunity to offer non-immune travellers the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The May issue of Vaccine Update and also a further special issue of Vaccine Update also published in May outlines useful guidance in relation to use of MMR for travel purposes. Essentially, a GP can choose to charge a traveller or provide the vaccine on the NHS. If charging, the vaccine must be bought in and the full cost be charged to the patient. If given on the NHS, the vaccine should still be purchased, but its cost reclaimed from the PCT. Central stock cannot be used for travel vaccines. However the national policy is to give two doses of MMR vaccine to anyone with incomplete vaccination history and for this, central stock can be used. For further details go to <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicHealth/Immunisation/Vaccineupdate/index.htm> ●

Jane Chiodini

MSc(Travel Med), RGN, RM, FFTM
RCPS(Glasg)

Jane is a travel health specialist nurse with 20 years' experience of seeing travellers in a primary care setting. She has been training practice nurses in travel health for many years and is passionate about designing tools and materials for nurses to use in practice, which can be found at www.janechiodini.co.uk