

Massive effort to deliver one billion doses of polio vaccine in India

Polio eradication is now a key global goal and will be the second disease ever to be eradicated after smallpox. Significant achievements have been made since the launch of the polio eradication initiative in 1988. The number of polio cases has fallen from an estimated 350,000 in 1988 to some 6,700 reported cases in 1999 and the number of polio-endemic countries has fallen from 125 to 30. Polio has been eradicated from the Americas, Europe, the countries of the Western Pacific, much of the Middle East and disappeared from most of northern and southern Africa. Currently polio cases are concentrated in parts of Africa and the Indian sub-continent. Historically India has accounted for more than half of the world's polio cases and the challenge now in India is in eight densely populated States, in particular Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and the city of Delhi.

As part of a global campaign to eradicate the disease, billed 'Every Child Counts', a massive public health initiative to eradicate polio has been developed in India. A national

immunisation day was launched on the 26 March 2000 as part of an intensified phase of the campaign in India. This year India has doubled the number of monthly national immunisation day rounds from two to four throughout the country and added in two more rounds in eight high-risk States. One billion doses of polio vaccine have been delivered to the nation's children in the last 12 months.

Currently there is a shortfall of US \$300 million out of a total of US \$1 billion needed to achieve eradication in 2005. With the eradication of polio and the eventual cessation of polio immunisation, the world will save US \$1.5 billion per year.

Further information can be obtained from the following internet websites:

WWW Virtual Library Public Health at:
<http://www.ldb.org/vl/index.htm>

WWW Virtual Library Circumpolar Peoples at:
<http://www.ldb.org/vl/cp/index.htm>

Yellow fever vaccination for the Hajj

As mentioned in the previous issue of *CDI*, at the request of the Department of Health and Aged Care, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has obtained advice from the Government of Saudi Arabia concerning the yellow fever vaccination requirements for pilgrims to the Hajj.

The policy of the Saudi Government is that all pilgrims arriving in Saudi Arabia are required to be vaccinated for yellow fever, irrespective of their country of origin.

The Department of Health and Aged Care has been advised by the Saudi Embassy in Canberra that Australian

applicants for the special Hajj visa are required to submit a valid yellow fever vaccination certificate with their visa application. A visa will not be granted if the applicant has not been vaccinated for yellow fever.

The Department will liaise with CSL Ltd, the only Australian supplier of yellow fever vaccine, to ensure as much as possible that there is sufficient supply of vaccine in Australia at the start of each year in order to meet the additional demand resulting from the Saudi policy.

Polio free 2000

Register now

It's time to act

Australia and the rest of the World Health Organization's Western Pacific Region (WPRO) are moving rapidly towards the certification of polio eradication. The Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL) is coordinating wild poliovirus containment in Australia. A team led by Mrs Margery Kennett and Dr Heath Kelly is now preparing a National Plan for Polio Containment, which is required for certification of polio eradication. The Plan includes two main components - a national search for medical/biological laboratories and a national inventory. All laboratories will be contacted regardless of size and focus.

Your cooperation is vital for this certification. You are invited to register with us now so that we can contact you and provide further information. Please contact:

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