

Mobile phones monitor vaccine response

December 22 2014, by Timothy Oliver



Researchers enjoyed an 80 per cent response rate to their SMS survey of vaccine reponse in pregnant women. Credit: Anders Adermark

WA researchers used mobile phone text messages to implement a real-time safety monitoring program for pregnant women immunised with trivalent influenza vaccine (TIV).

Run by the WA Department of Health and UWA, this was the first time short message service (SMS) had been used to monitor TIV reactions in [pregnant women](#).

Department of Health researcher Annette Regan says it was surprising

how well the program worked.

"We've run a [vaccine safety](#) monitoring program of pregnant women since 2012. In that first year it took us about six months to follow up 350 women over the telephone," she says.

"Typically, when you're doing surveys, it's hard to get people to take the five or ten minutes. We would expect maybe 50 per cent of people who were enrolled to respond.

Ms Regan says around 80 per cent of women responded to their text messages.

"In 2013 we had 3,000 women participate, and then this year we had another 1,200 women," she says.

Data reassuring

TIV has been recommended for pregnant women in Australia for more than a decade, and funded since 2009, yet vaccination coverage remains low, the study reports.

Ms Regan says pregnant women often cite [safety](#) concerns as the major barrier to vaccination, but that no serious reactions were reported in any of the years they've done the follow-up.

Around 14 per cent of respondents reported a mild reaction, such as localised pain, headache or fatigue.

"We weren't expecting to see any safety issues with the vaccine. It was our hope to collect this information and feed it back to reassure these women that the vaccine is safe," she says.

"This sort of information is really valuable for reassuring both pregnant women and their providers."

"Overall we got really supportive data for the safety of trivalent influenza vaccination," she says.

Ms Regan says this kind of study can reassure anti-natal care providers.

"I think something like 30 per cent [of anti-natal care providers] erroneously are not sure that the [vaccine](#) is safe," she says.

"A really big driver of women being vaccinated is actually whether or not their health care professional recommends it to them."

To combat this, Ms Regan's team also surveyed 1,200 healthcare workers as part of this year's follow-up program.

Ms Regan says they plan to develop a website for those unsure about TIV's safety during pregnancy.

More information: "Using SMS to monitor adverse events following trivalent influenza vaccination in pregnant women." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* DOI: 10.1111/ajo.12266

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