**What you [and parents] need to know about Meningococcal Disease**

Invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) is a rare but rapidly progressing and devastating disease that is caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis.* Since July 2018, all children in Australia are offered a vaccine against serogroups A, C, W and Y at 12 months of age on the National Immunisation Program (previously provided as meningococcal C) and most States and Territories are currently offering meningococcal ACWY vaccination to adolescents.

The early non-specific features of the disease make it difficult to diagnose and despite appropriate medical treatment approximately 10% of cases are fatal and up to 1 in 5 survivors have permanent sequelae1,2. Hear firsthand from a survivor of this rare disease and the impact that it has had on her life.

In recent years, the epidemiology of meningococcal disease has been changing, and the latest data relating to serogroup prevalence and the most affected age groups will be discussed.

Meningococcal B is the most common cause of disease in infants under 1 year and adolescents (15-19 years)3, however, vaccination against serogroup B is currently not offered on the National Immunisation Programme.

Parents are generally aware of meningococcal disease, but nearly one in two Australian parents (46%) incorrectly believe that all strains of the meningococcal bacteria are covered by the NIPand rely on their doctor for information about vaccines4. Parents may not be aware that meningococcal B vaccine is available through private prescription. Strategies and tools for having a productive discussion with parents about meningococcal B vaccination will be presented, to help you to ensure that all parents are aware of meningococcal disease and the vaccination options available to help protect their child.

References:

1. Meningococcal meningitis factsheet No 141. World Health Organization website. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs141/en/> [accessed September 2018]
2. Rosenstein NE, et al. *N Engl J Med*. 2001; **344**:1378-1388
3. Australian Government Department of Health, Invasive meningococcal disease national surveillance report:with a focus on MenW. 31 December 2017. <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-meningococcal-W.htm> [accessed September 2018].
4. Data on file. Information derived from an online questionnaire of 1,000 Australian parents with children under the age of four, conducted by Ipsos on behalf of GSK in May 2017. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information on parents habits and perceptions on vaccination, meningococcal disease and general child health concerns. AUS/VAC/0047/17.