THE ORGANIZATION AND DELIVERY OF
VACCINATION SERVICES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

DENMARK

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Denmark

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Governance

For vaccination against both measles and rubella, the Danish Health Authority (*Sundhedsstyrelsen*) is in charge of developing and overseeing the implementation of national vaccination plans and programmes. It recommends to the Ministry of Health a vaccine for use in a publicly financed programme. Ultimately, financing is secured via legislation passed in the Danish Parliament. When considering vaccine candidates, the Danish Health Authority prioritizes according to the seriousness of the disease to be prevented. The agency has a vaccination committee with members drawn from the relevant medical specialties (paediatrics, infectious diseases, general medicine and public health) and from the Statens Serum Institut, the Danish Medicines Agency and the Danish Patient Safety Authority.

The Danish Medicines Agency is responsible for approval if no central European Medicines Agency (EMA) approval exists (which is the case for almost all new vaccines). It is also responsible for pharmacovigilance, passively receiving reports on suspected adverse events from both health care personnel and private persons (patients/family members, etc.).

The Statens Serum Institut provides vaccines for use in public tenders. They also advise health care personnel on the use of vaccines and monitor the uptake of vaccine programmes, as well as monitoring the diseases prevented by the vaccine. For influenza, they also monitor day-by-day all-cause mortality as a proxy for influenza-related mortality during the influenza season.

The Danish Patient Safety Authority monitors safe practices among health care personnel and is responsible for contact tracing.

Vaccination programmes are almost always organized nationally. An exception would be the Capital Region, which offers free hepatitis B vaccination to men who have sex with men (MSM).

There is no national vaccination plan. All vaccines are recommended, but no vaccine is mandatory.

In Denmark all residents are assigned a unique personal identification number which is used for registration of the vaccine. Since November 2015 all vaccinations are required to be reported to the Danish Vaccination Registry. It is also possible to register previously administered vaccines in this registry. The vaccination registry is run by the Danish Health Data Authority. Since May 2014 reminders are sent (from the Statens Serum Institut) to parents whose children are recorded as missing at least one childhood vaccine (including MMR). Electronic letters are sent out when the child is 2, 6½ and 14 years of age.

There are no targeted measures for specific groups in the population. Asylum seekers (children) are offered vaccinations in the asylum centres run by the Danish Red Cross and some municipalities.

The main incentive for general practitioners to vaccinate is driven by their reimbursement for the activity by the National Health Service. The cost per vaccination has been agreed between the Medical Practitioners Organization and the National Health Service.

Vaccination coverage is calculated by birth cohort. The numerator is the number of individuals registered with an administered vaccine and the denominator is the number of individuals of that age residing in Denmark at the time of calculation. Real-time data on coverage is shown on the website of the Statens Serum Institut. For influenza, the coverage is calculated for all risk groups (number of doses given per season) and by age groups, e.g. for persons aged 65 years and above (proportion vaccinated per season).

Provision

In principle, any medical doctor can administer vaccines. Doctors with type B authorization can delegate to assisting personnel, i.e. nurses.

Measles

In practice, the majority of measles vaccines are given by primary health care providers (general practitioners/nurses in general practitioner clinics). School vaccination is normally not done in Denmark but is currently being considered for certain vaccines.

Influenza

Most influenza vaccines for adults are given by primary health care providers (general practitioners/nurses in general practitioner clinics), but dedicated vaccination clinics (including mobile units/in homes for older people/in pharmacies) also perform vaccinations (provided they report their activity to the vaccination registry).

Financing

Measles

Childhood MMR vaccination is free of charge for all residents (two doses recommended at 15 months and 4 years of age; the offer ends when the child turns 18 years of age).

The cost (vaccine and vaccination fee) is covered by the National Health Service. The five regions tax their citizens and are responsible for regional health costs, including costs for vaccination. There is no patient payment. In asylum centres children are offered MMR vaccination free of charge, covered by the Danish Red Cross, which is responsible for the centres.

Influenza

Vaccination is free of charge for defined risk groups (those with a number of medical conditions, those aged 65 and over, and pregnant women in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters).

The doctors (general practitioners and vaccination clinics) buy the influenza vaccines from the Statens Serum Institut and are reimbursed by the National Health Service at a fixed price. For defined risk groups there is no patient payment. Employers may choose to pay for vaccination of employees not in the risk groups.

Despite free vaccination, the uptake of influenza vaccines for people aged 65 years and above is only around 50%. No precise data on coverage exists for the other medical risk groups.

Key barriers and facilitators

Current MMR coverage in the childhood vaccination programme is around 95% for MMR1 and around 90% for MMR2, giving only minor room for improvement (Denmark obtained WHO measles elimination status in 2017). However, coverage was lower in previous cohorts, which is why the government decided to offer free MMR vaccination for all non-immune residents as of 1 April 2018 (one dose, unlimited offer).

For adult influenza vaccination, fewer than half of the defined risk groups are currently vaccinated. There is a great variety in the ways people can get vaccinated, and organizational aspects, financing and delivery of services do not appear to be important barriers to vaccination. However, it seems the public perception of influenza as a potentially serious disease is missing.

References

Danish Health Authority: https://www.sst.dk/en

Danish Health Data Authority: https://sundhedsdatastyrelsen.dk/da

Danish Medicines Agency: https://laegemiddelstyrelsen.dk/en/

Danish Patient Safety Authority: https://stps.dk/en/

Danish Vaccination Registry: https://sundhedsdatastyrelsen.dk/vaccinationsregister

Staten Serum Institut: https://www.ssi.dk/English.aspx