

Meningococcal Public Research

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For Australian media

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MEDIA RELEASE

Half of parents had their scheduled meningococcal disease appointments either cancelled or delayed during the COVID-19 pandemic– new survey

A new survey¹ shows that almost half (47%) of Australian children's scheduled meningococcal disease appointments were delayed or cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings come from a multi-country survey led by Ipsos on behalf of GSK. The study captured the views of thousands of parents worldwide, 484 of whom were Australian with children aged between 0-4 years old.

The main reasons Australian parents cancelled or delayed meningococcal disease appointments were due to lockdown regulations (52%) and concerns of catching COVID-19 in public places (40%).

The survey findings highlighted what activities Australian parents would be most comfortable doing with their children after the lockdown regulations eased. Socialising with groups of friends or family in person was the greatest priority (87%) whereas one in four said they would not be likely to catch up on missed or delayed meningococcal disease appointments (27%).

Dr Co Luu, the Vaccines Medical Lead for GSK Australia says that the results showed Australia was doing slightly better than some other countries but that there was still no room for local complacency.

"It's concerning that half of the Australian parents surveyed either delayed or cancelled scheduled meningococcal disease appointments due to lockdown regulations. However, what is perhaps more concerning is that one in four parents are still unlikely to catch up on any missed or delayed meningococcal disease appointments that happened during that time," said Dr Luu.

'It's important parents see their child's doctor at regular times to ensure they have relevant information for their child's age group to help protect their family.'

Infectious diseases paediatrician Professor Robert Booy says parents should talk to their GP to ensure they stick to their scheduled meningococcal disease appointments for children in the suitable age ranges.

"There will be some hesitancy in the current environment and the survey did find there was still 13% of parents who said they would not reschedule their child's appointment among ongoing concerns about COVID-19," said Professor Booy.

"While COVID-19 continues to have an impact on our communities and healthcare systems, health authorities recommend that routine checks and appointments should continue to be administered. Now that appropriate measures are being taken to support a safe return to clinics, it's time for

parents and patients to reach out to their doctors to catch up on missed appointments,” concluded Professor Booy.

Ends

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About the Survey

To identify a representative sample of adults 18+, quotas were set by gender, age, geographic area of residence, and work status and the final data weighted to this audience. Further filter questions were asked of participants to identify the sample for this survey.

As well as providing the results individually for each of the eight countries included in the survey, Ipsos produced an overall total based on “country averages.” This is where the results from each country have the same weight rather than the true population proportions across the eight countries, with the following sample sizes:

- US (n=1500)
- UK (n=500)
- France (n=500)
- Germany (n=476)
- Italy (n=500)
- Brazil (n=501)
- Argentina (n=501)
- Australia (n=484)

About Invasive Meningococcal Disease

Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD) is uncommon², with country-specific reported cases ranging from 0.1 to 2.4 cases per 100,000 population in 2017³. However, this rare but devastating infection can progress rapidly, causing serious disability or death within 24 hours⁴. The highest incidence occurs in the most vulnerable group of infants and young children (< 5 years of age), followed by adolescents between 15-19 years of age⁶.

Symptoms of meningococcal disease can be difficult to recognise and can easily be mistaken for a common cold or virus. While most will survive and recover fully, up to one in 10 of those who contract the disease may die, even with appropriate treatment⁷. Additionally, around 20 per cent of those who survive the disease may suffer long-term disabilities including brain damage, deafness or loss of limbs⁸.

About GSK

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References

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