



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Corning Tower The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Albany, New York 12237

Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H.
Commissioner

Dennis P. Whalen
Executive Deputy Commissioner

April 2006

Dear Hospital Administrator/Medical Director:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you about recently updated recommendations to improve the prevention of perinatal and early childhood hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection in the United States.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recently recommended that all delivery hospitals establish standing orders for the routine administration of hepatitis B vaccine so that all medically stable infants weighing at least 2000 grams receive hepatitis B vaccine at birth. The provision of hepatitis B vaccine to all infants at birth provides a "safety net" to high-risk infants who do not receive appropriate prophylactic treatment to prevent HBV transmission at birth, and to infants who are exposed to HBV postnatally from another family member or caregiver. The first dose of hepatitis B vaccine should only rarely be delayed until after hospital discharge and only after meeting the criteria described in the ACIP statement. As already required by state law, infants born to hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) positive women, or women with unknown HBsAg test results, must receive both hepatitis B vaccine and hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) within 12 hours of birth.

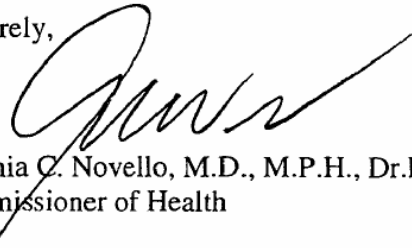
The ACIP recommendations establish a standard of care that the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) supports. Therefore, all New York State birthing hospitals should immediately comply by implementing standing orders for vaccination of all newborns with hepatitis B vaccine within 12 hours of birth.

The NYSDOH recognizes that the cost of hepatitis B vaccine may be an issue for hospitals. In 2003, the Department established the Hepatitis B Hospital Birth Dose Program. This program provides state-funded hepatitis B vaccine, free of charge, to any birthing hospital in New York State that implements standing orders for the hepatitis B birth dose. The majority of New York State's birthing hospitals have already enrolled in this program. I commend the enrolled hospitals for their commitment to providing the "best practice" in their care for newborns. If your hospital is not currently enrolled in the Birth Dose Program, please submit the enclosed "Hepatitis B Birth Dose Program Application," along with a copy of your hospital's hepatitis B birth dose standing orders, to the Immunization Program as soon as possible.

For your convenience, a copy of the recent recommendations of the CDC's ACIP entitled: *A Comprehensive Immunization Strategy to Eliminate Transmission of Hepatitis B Virus Infection in the United States* is enclosed. Also enclosed is the Immunization Action Coalition's publication entitled: *Medical Errors Put Infants at Risk of Hepatitis B Transmission – Six Case Reports*. These cases, which recently occurred in New York State, underscore the importance of birthing hospitals establishing a standing order birth dose policy.

I ask you to comply with this standard of care to protect all infants from transmission of hepatitis B infection by implementing standing orders for the hepatitis B birth dose in your hospital. If you have further questions about this program or require assistance with the development of hepatitis B birth dose standing orders please contact Elizabeth Herlihy, RN, MS, Perinatal Hepatitis B Program Manager, at (518) 473-4437.

Sincerely,



Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H.
Commissioner of Health

Enclosures

cc: Director of Ob/Gyn
Director of Neonatal Care and Pediatrics
Director of Pharmacy
Director of Quality Management
Infection Control Nurse
Labor/Delivery/Nursery Managers
Regional DOH Offices
Local Health Departments