

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir

### Evaluation of the use of patient information sheets for immunisations in British Forces Germany Health Service

The use of standard information sheets prior to immunisation is not widely practiced in the NHS, instead relying on the information sheets that are provided with the vaccine and this has also been the practice in British Forces Germany Health Service (BFG HS) Primary Health Centres (PHCs). During liaison visits to US military medical facilities in Germany the use of standardised patient information sheets for routine immunisations was noted and was reputed to improve the quality of patient knowledge for informed consent amongst formed bodies of troops (e.g. before deployment), although there is no literature to support this contention. It was therefore suggested that such information sheets should be trialled in BFG HS.

Following a successful trial of 12 sheets covering standard vaccinations\* performed at the JHQ Rheindahlen PHC in the summer of 2006, the sheets were distributed for general usage in BFG HS and a questionnaire survey completed to evaluate the improvement in immunisation practice. The lead immunisation nurses at all BFG HS PHCs rated 5 aspects of the sheets using a 7 point scale (0= no improvement to 6=maximum satisfaction) derived from the Likert Measurement of Attitude Scale (1) after a 5 month audit period ending on 1st March 2007. The 5 areas of interest were as follows 1) improved patient knowledge for informed consent; 2) time saved in the immunisation process; 3) increase in patient satisfaction; 4) overall improvement in the vaccination process and 5) usefulness in teaching the objective of obtaining informed patient consent. The standard immunisation information sheets may be viewed at <http://cn5rsts007/ukscg/bfghs>

Completed questionnaires were received from 10 medical centres covering approximately half of the BFG population at risk. The results of the questionnaire and the total number of vaccinations given in for each PHC are detailed in the table. All practices felt patient knowledge for informed consent improved, whereas time savings were not felt to be so significant with 2 practices reporting no time savings at all. All practices rated all other aspects of the information sheets at least 3 out of 6.

PhC	Score (0-6) for Question No.					Total Immunisations Given
	1	2	3	4	5	
Bielefeld	3	0	3	3	5	134
SHAPE	5	3	4	5	4	Not available
Javelin Bks Elmpt1	4	0	4	5	4	143
Javelin Bks Elmpt2	5	2	5	5	5	See above
Gutersloh	4	5	4	3	4	410
JHQ	5	5	6	4	6	65
Osnabruck	6	4	6	4	4	840
Munster	5	2	4	6	4	65
Dulmen	5	5	5	5	3	56
Celle	5	5	5	5	5	51

\*Anthrax, Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Meningococcal C ACWY, Tick Borne Encephalitis, Diphtheria + Tetanus + Polio, BCG, Japanese Encephalitis, Yellow Fever, MMR, Rabies

Given their long usage in the US military medical services, it is surprising that there is no published literature confirming their efficacy, and we submit this small study as preliminary evidence of their benefit. The universally high level of acceptance of these sheets in the 10 BFG HS PHCs indicates that their adoption enhances best immunisation practice, especially in improving patient knowledge for informed consent (2,3). The absence of time savings from their use is perhaps surprising and we would recommend further evaluation over a longer period and for a wider patient base.

This audit supports the use of standard patient information vaccination sheets for immunisations at Military Medical Centres and we propose their adoption throughout APHCS in the UK be considered.

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### References:

1. Likert, R. A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes. *Arch Psyc* 1932; **140**, 55.
2. DH Green Book Immunisation Against Infectious Disease 2006 ([www.dh.gov.uk/greenbook](http://www.dh.gov.uk/greenbook)).
3. Joint Services Manual of Immunological Procedures – JSP 311.