By email

Paul F Hope
request-252669-16d5869e@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: 08/02/sr/586

6 March 2015

Dear Mr Hope

Re: Influenza vaccine efficacy

Thank you for your email of 8 February 2015 in which you asked for information about Public Health England’s calculation of the efficacy of the seasonal influenza (flu) vaccine.

Your email has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. In accordance with Section 1(1)(a), I can confirm that Public Health England (PHE) does hold the information you have specified.

You asked:

1. **PHE’s efficacy calculations for this year’s seasonal flu vaccination**

Each season PHE undertakes mid- and end-of-season flu vaccine effectiveness (VE) (not "efficacy") calculations. Effectiveness estimates provide an indication of the protection provided to an individual when delivered in a public health programme. Effectiveness is calculated through a range of observational studies e.g. cohort and case-control design. Efficacy estimates, on the other hand, provide an estimate of the protection provided to an individual by a vaccine under the idealised conditions of a randomised clinical trial, usually prior to licensure. The PHE estimate is from a post-licensure study undertaken through an observational design (a specific type of case-control study with crude VE = (1 - OR) (OR is the odds ratio).

The flu VE analysis is usually undertaken annually and the results are usually published in Eurosurveillance. Eurosurveillance is a European peer-reviewed scientific journal devoted to the epidemiology, surveillance, prevention and control of communicable diseases, which is a weekly online journal, published every Thursday. This season’s flu VE estimate was published in Eurosurveillance on 5 February 2015 and is available at: http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=21025.
2. **When did PHE calculate this year's flu vaccination efficacy?**

PHE completed the mid-season estimate in the final week of January 2015.

3. **Who did PHE inform when they calculated this year's seasonal flu efficacy?**

After completing calculation of this year’s seasonal flu VE estimate, PHE informed the Department of Health, and this estimate was also published in Eurosurveillance.

4. **What press releases were issued in relation to these efficacy calculations?**


5. **When were these press releases issued?**

The press release was issued on 5 February 2015, the same date as the publication of the Eurosurveillance article. Subsequent to the issuing of the press release and journal article, a number of press interviews were also carried out.

6. **Has PHE stated anywhere that the vaccine “protects three in a hundred people – compared to 50 per cent effectiveness typically seen in recent years”?**

PHE is not aware that it has made the statement above.

7. **Have PHE attempted to correct this statement (6) attributed to them?**

In order to promote a better understanding of a number of vaccine related terms, PHE intends to add a clear and simple description of these terms, including vaccine effectiveness, on the PHE website.

If you have any queries regarding the information that has been supplied to you, please refer your query to me in writing in the first instance. If you remain dissatisfied and would like to request an internal review, then please contact us at the address above or by emailing foi@phe.gov.uk

Please note that you have the right to an independent review by the Information Commissioner’s Office if a complaint cannot be resolved through the PHE complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner’s Office can be contacted by writing to Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Officer