

INFLUENZA VACCINES AND VACCINATION IN POLAND

L.B. Brydak^{1,2}, A. Woźniak -Kosek¹, A. Nitsch-Osuch³

¹Department of Influenza Research. National Influenza Center, National Institute of Public Health – National Institute of Hygiene, Warsaw, Poland, Chocimska street 24, 00-791 Warsaw; lbrydak@pzh.gov.pl; ²Department of Microbiology and Immunology Faculty of Biology, University of Szczecin, Szczecin, Poland; ³Department of Family Medicine, Warsaw Medical University, Poland

Influenza is a cause of seasonal infections worldwide which can lead to complications and deaths in all age groups. According to information from the World Health Organisation, 5-25% of the population throughout the world suffers from influenza and influenza-like virus every year, with the number of deaths ranging from 0.5 and 1 million individuals. In many countries, including Poland, the rate of vaccination against influenza is still at a very low level in all age groups, which leads to high social costs and not infrequently to family tragedies in the case of irreversible complications of influenza, or the death of a loved one. The cheapest and most effective way to combat influenza is through vaccination. Therefore, regular vaccination is one of the few steps that may be taken to protect individuals, especially in high-risk groups, from the potential and serious complications of influenza. Regular vaccination should be part of good medical practice as well as of the individual engagement of people in their own health and in that of their family. Despite the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and of 14 international scientific societies, there is a reluctance to implement preventive vaccination. Vaccines against influenza available in Poland are inactivated, i.e., they contain fragments of *killed* influenza virus, *split* and *subunit* in type, and therefore they are not able to multiply in the body and cause disease, but produce a specific immunity directed against the influenza virus. In the epidemic season 2011/2012 the level of distribution of the seasonal influenza vaccines was very low with 4.5% of the population vaccinated.