

Vigilance still needed for flu vaccine

 17 November, 2014 [Antonio Bradley](#) 0 comments

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Australia is vulnerable to a repeat of the 2010 flu vaccination scare unless it steps up safety monitoring, an infectious diseases expert warns.

Professor Heath Kelly (pictured), head of the epidemiology unit at the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory, **is calling for annual safety monitoring of flu vaccines.**

His comments in this week's *Medical Journal of Australia* coincide with a study showing the **inactivated influenza vaccines licensed for use in children in Australia are reassuringly safe.**

The risk of fever within 72 hours of vaccination was about 6%, the national phone survey of parents of almost 900 children aged between six months and 10 years revealed.

But Professor Kelly warned against being lulled into a false sense of security, the dangers of which were shown by the 2010 Fluvax scare that saw a spike in febrile convulsions in vaccinated Australian children.

"Safety is assumed from the absence of prior reported adverse events," the professor said.

"However, the experience of 2010 suggests the assumption that past safety predicts present safety might not be valid."

Professor Kelly said annual monitoring of the safety and efficacy of influenza vaccines represented good public policy, and should be funded as part of the Influenza Immunisation Program.

Vaccines constantly required strain changes, meaning there was no time for annual safety or efficacy trials, he said.

Perth GP Dr Alan Leeb received the Peter Mudge Medal at this year's RACGP conference for his **Smartvax post-vaccination surveillance system**, which automatically sends SMS messages to patients and families asking about adverse events.

MJA 2014; 201:560-61.

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*Routine infant vaccination against hep B began nationally in 2000.

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Mike

I think you would call this ' anecdotal evidence '. Can we at least try to steer in the general direction of objectivity in these debates.

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