

WEBSITE

www.who.int1211 GENEVA 27 SWITZERLAND - TELEPHONE: (41) 22.791.21.11 - FAX: (41) 22.791.31.11 - E-MAIL: inf@who.int**Note for the media WHO/9
10 May 2005****WEBSITES PROVIDING INFORMATION ON VACCINE SAFETY
RECOGNIZED FOR COMPLYING WITH GOOD INFORMATION
PRACTICES**

Geneva - Vaccines are one of the greatest achievements in medicine and public health. They prevent suffering, disability and more than two million deaths per year (2003). Due to the success of immunization, however, some diseases are no longer perceived as a threat. Certain groups have even questioned the utility of vaccination, in spite of its ongoing necessity to control disease. In recent years, a number of websites providing unbalanced, misleading and alarming vaccine safety information have been established, making it more difficult to identify and access reliable sources of information on the web.

Acknowledging the above-mentioned issues and urged by governments, key non-governmental organizations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), WHO initiated the Vaccine Safety Net Project in 2003.

"The Vaccine Safety Net was established to facilitate the access of public health authorities, health professionals and the public to reliable information on vaccine safety," said Dr Philippe Duclos, Medical Officer, who is leading WHO's Immunization Safety Priority Project.

A key player in the Vaccine Safety Net Project is the Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS)¹, established by WHO in 1999 to respond promptly, efficiently, and with scientific rigour to vaccine safety issues of potential global importance.

Four criteria for good information practices regarding credibility, content, accessibility and design were developed by the GACVS. To comply with credibility and content criteria, websites must clearly indicate the purpose of the site, disclose their ownership and information sources, reveal their sponsors, provide contact information, have a data protection policy, and provide quality information in sufficient quantity.

Since the beginning of website evaluation in December 2003, twenty-three sites providing information on vaccine safety have been determined to meet the credibility and content criteria defined by the GACVS, and have thus been accepted to join the Vaccine Safety Net. These websites are listed at: http://www.who.int/immunization_safety/safety_quality/approved_vaccine_safety_websites/en/ and provide information to English, Dutch, French, German, Italian and Spanish-speaking audiences.

¹ See http://www.who.int/vaccine_safety/en/ for further information

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The listing of a site does not indicate endorsement by WHO of the site's content. Commercial sites are not eligible for membership of the Vaccine Safety Net.

Additional websites are currently under review. In order to ensure a global reach, a future priority of the Vaccine Safety Net Project will be the further expansion to websites in languages other than English and to websites from all regions of the world.

Organizations with websites that meet the GACVS credibility and content criteria are: Asociación Española de Vacunología; Catalogue et Index des Sites Médicaux Francophones (CISMeF), Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Rouen; Childhood Immunization Support Program (CISP), American Academy of Pediatrics; Department of Health, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Division of Viral Hepatitis, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS); Health Protection Agency, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Immunization Action Coalition (IAC); Murcia Salud; National Immunization Program (NIP), United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Network for Immunization Information (NNii); National Vaccination Programme of the Netherlands; Network for Education and Support in Immunisation (NESI); Network Italiano dei Servizi di Vaccinazione (NIV); Children's Vaccine Program (CVP) of the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH); Public Health Agency of Canada; Robert Koch Institute (RKI); Sabin Vaccine Institute; Todosvacunados; Vaccine Education Center (VEC), Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; and Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB).

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