
MEMO

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Date: | August 13, 2019 |
| To: | NH Physicians and Staff |
| From: | Dr. Rakel Kling, Medical Health Officer |
| Re: | Interim guidelines for the use of rabies vaccine |

Following the fatal case of rabies in B.C. on July 14th there has been a considerable increase in the provision of Rabies Post Exposure Prophylaxis (RPEP), which includes both rabies vaccine and rabies immunoglobulin, across the province. This had led to a province wide shortage of rabies immunoglobulin and especially rabies vaccine. The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) are asking for cooperation in following updated guidelines created to conserve both rabies vaccine and rabies immunoglobulin (RIG). [Rabies immunoglobulin conserving guidelines](#) advise that any area of exposure or wound be infiltrated, and **that no additional RIG be given via the IM route** as this has been shown to be of limited effectiveness.

Now that Health Authorities have successfully implemented [rabies immunoglobulin conserving guidelines](#) the PHO and BCCDC are asking that Health Authorities (HA) implement new rabies vaccine conserving guidelines (attached), which advise for the **preferential use of intradermal rabies vaccine administration**. This will allow for fewer doses of vaccine to be used as well as less volume of vaccine, therefore multiple clients can receive vaccine from the same vial within 6 hours of opening it.

In order to most efficiently follow these guidelines and conserve vaccine, HA's are being asked to centralize the provision of RPEP in order to batch doses of vaccine together. At this time, central sites for the provision of RPEP will be the sites that RPEP is currently stored in – Prince George, Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Terrace and Smithers. Further sites may be considered based on demand. This will require clients who live in other communities to travel to receive RPEP. Clients from remote communities will not be required to travel and the Medical Health Officer will review individual requests to not travel for RPEP.

We appreciate that these changes may be less convenient for patients; however, we need to manage vaccine supply efficiently to be able to continue the timely provision of RPEP when indicated. As before, please continue to consult with a Medical Health Officer before beginning an RPEP series.

For questions specific to the interim guidelines for the use of rabies vaccine, please consult your local Public Health Resource Nurse, the Northern Health CD HUB (250-565-2990) or Medical Health Officer. After hours and weekends, the MHO on call can be reached at 250-565-2000.
