

## Reports of Deaths Following Influenza Immunizations in the 2006/2007 Season

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### **Introduction**

In October 2006 the annual Dutch national flu-immunization campaign was temporarily suspended because of Israeli reports of individuals who died 4-5 days after immunization with the Vaxigrip 2006/2007 influenza vaccine. We report on deaths reported to the Netherlands Pharmacovigilance Centre Lareb following influenza immunization during the 2006/2007 influenza season.

### **Methods:**

Case by case analysis and causality assessment of all reports to Lareb of deaths following influenza immunization the 2006/2007 season. Comparison with the number of reports received in previous years.

### **Results**

Reports of deaths following influenza immunization to Lareb ranged from 4 reports in 2004 and zero reports in 2005. Lareb received 5 reports of deaths following influenza immunization in the 2006/2007 season. Three of the 5 reports of deaths to Lareb concerned individuals who were immunized with Vaxigrip 2006/2007. Two of the 5 individuals were over 65 years of age. Direct involvement of the vaccines was judged as possible after formal causality assessment with the Naranjo algorithm

### **Discussion**

Given the risk groups who are eligible for annual influenza immunization it is likely that vaccine-unrelated deaths will occur in the period following immunization. This confounding factor can damage public acceptance of influenza immunisation campaigns and complicate causality assessment. The media attention caused by the temporary suspension in the Netherlands did not lead to reduced participation in the national flu-immunisation campaign and did not generate an increase of reports of serious adverse reactions to Lareb. Swift, coordinated and thorough assessment of reported deaths is essential for decision making and to maintain public confidence. Therefore a task force of Lareb and the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) has been set up to monitor adverse reactions to influenza vaccines in the future.