Global vaccine safety blueprint

Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals



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Glossary

Prequalification

Prequalification is the procedure for assessing the acceptability of medicines, diagnostics and vaccines for purchase by the United Nations. Information on the prequalification of vaccines can be seen on the WHO web site at http://www.who.int/immunization_standards/vaccine_quality/pq_system/en/index.html.

Signal (safety signal)

The Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) has defined a signal as "information (from one or multiple sources) which suggests a new potentially causal association, or a new aspect of a known association, between an intervention and an event or set of related events, either adverse or beneficial, that is judged to be of sufficient likelihood to justify verificatory action." A signal is therefore a hypothesis, together with data and arguments.

Surveillance

Systematic ongoing collection, collation and analysis of data and the timely dissemination to those who need to know the information so that action can be taken. The data-collection method determines the type of surveillance, so that:

- passive surveillance is based on passive reporting;
- stimulated surveillance is based on stimulated reporting;
- active surveillance is based on systematic search for cases.

Active surveillance, in contrast to passive surveillance, seeks to ascertain completely the number of adverse events via a continuous pre-organised process. Examples of active surveillance are, cohort studies that have been conducted in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Denmark and others, to evaluate the safety of vaccines, in which all outcomes for specified events are identified in a predefined cohort using clinical information databases. Using such systems it is possible to ascertain events in a population completely, and in an unbiased manner, which facilitates accurate assessment of any potential safety issues.

Vaccine pharmacovigilance

The science and activities relating to the detection, assessment, understanding, prevention and communication of adverse events following immunization, or of any other vaccine- or immunization-related issues. Explanatory notes on this definition can be found at http://www.cioms.ch/activities/frame_vaccpharmadef.htm.

The term "enhanced capacity" for vaccine pharmacovigilance is used in the Blueprint in contrast to minimal pharmacovigilance capacity. Enhanced vaccine pharmacovigilance, at a minimum level, includes improved data collection, in passive surveillance, towards higher data quality and more complete data sets, but also improved collation, verification, analysis and communication by building capacity for stimulated and active surveillance. It also includes the ability to perform population-based studies and appropriate epidemiologic studies testing hypotheses by assessing relative and absolute risk ratios, when appropriate.

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