

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **B.C. babies get a break: Introduction of new infant vaccine means three fewer injections**

***B.C. the first Canadian province to introduce Infanrix-Hexa™, a vaccine offered in 70 countries worldwide***

**MISSISSAUGA, ON (February 25, 2009)** – British Columbia has become the first province – and the first jurisdiction in North America – to offer a children’s vaccine called Infanrix-hexa™, that contains six immunizations in one, resulting in three fewer needles in the overall B.C. infant vaccine schedule. The switch to the vaccine, currently available in 70 countries worldwide, took effect February 1.

Infants in B.C. typically receive both an injection that immunizes them against hepatitis B, and an injection that immunizes them against five other diseases, at their two, four and six-month check-ups. Infanrix-hexa™ replaces these two needles with a single injection that immunizes against all six diseases: hepatitis B, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib). The vaccination schedule for all other visits will remain the same.

“With a reduction in the number of injections that an infant receives at each visit, it is expected that the number of families who follow the provincial vaccination schedule will increase,” says Dr. Todd Sorokan, pediatrician and past president of the BC Pediatric Society. “Research shows that combination vaccines improve the rates of vaccination coverage with comparable side effects. This advance is a very important step forward in improving vaccine uptake in B.C.”

The Canadian Immunization Guide recommends that infants be given all vaccines on time.

“In order to get the best possible protection, I always recommend following the provincial vaccination schedule,” says Dr. Sorokan.

Detailed information for healthcare professionals about the new infant vaccine schedule is available at [www.immunizebc.ca](http://www.immunizebc.ca).

#### **The importance of immunizing infants against hepatitis B**

There was a time when B.C. had more hepatitis B infections than any other province. Today, it has the most comprehensive hepatitis B vaccination program in the country as the only province to offer hepatitis B vaccinations to both infants and adolescents. New Brunswick, PEI and the territories are the only other regions to offer the vaccine to infants.

Research suggests about one-third of chronic hepatitis B infections are picked up during infancy and early childhood. Many of these early hepatitis B infections can be prevented, and the overall incidence decreased, with the use of the vaccine in infancy. <sup>i</sup>

**About INFANRIX-hexa <sup>TM</sup>**

INFANRIX-hexa <sup>TM</sup> was first commercialized in Germany in November 2000 and is sold in over 70 countries worldwide, including Australia, members of the European Union and parts of South America. Worldwide, over 38.5 million doses have been distributed to date and the vaccine is generally well tolerated.

**About GlaxoSmithKline**

GlaxoSmithKline Inc. – one of the world’s leading research-based pharmaceutical, vaccine and health-care companies – is committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer. In Canada, GlaxoSmithKline is a top 15 investor in research and development, contributing more than \$178 million in 2007 alone. GSK is designated a Caring Company by Imagine Canada, and is recognized as one of the 50 best companies to work for in Canada.

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INFANRIX-hexa <sup>TM</sup> is a trademark of the GlaxoSmithKline group of companies.

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<sup>i</sup> Canadian Medical Association Journal. Hepatitis B immunization strategies: timing is everything. January 20, 2009; 180.