Therapeutics

Review: Inactivated vaccines provide the greatest protection against influenza in healthy persons


QUESTION
What is the effectiveness of vaccines in preventing influenza in healthy adults?

DATA SOURCES
Studies were identified by searching MEDLINE (1966 to 1997) with the terms influenza, route (oral), route (parenteral), and vaccine; searching EMBASE/Excerpta Medica (1990 to 1997) and the Cochrane Controlled Trials Register; hand searching the journal Vaccine to 1997; scanning the bibliographies of articles; and contacting manufacturers of vaccines and authors of studies in the review.

STUDY SELECTION
Studies were selected if they were quasi-randomized or randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that compared influenza vaccines with placebo, control vaccines, or no intervention or doses or schedules of influenza vaccine in healthy persons 14 to 60 years of age and that assessed protection from exposure to naturally occurring influenza.

DATA EXTRACTION
Data were extracted on study quality, participant characteristics, intervention, and outcomes. Outcomes included rates of influenza (clinically defined [unspecified], clinically defined on the basis of specific symptoms or signs [specified], and serologically confirmed), hospital admissions, working days lost, and adverse events.

MAIN RESULTS
20 trials were included (14 RCTs) evaluating 3 types of vaccine: live attenuated aerosol (n = 26 369), inactivated aerosol (n = 1506), and inactivated parenteral (n = 23 628). Live aerosol vaccines were not effective for preventing either type of clinically defined influenza (2 trials). Inactivated vaccines were effective in preventing influenza: Both inactivated aerosol and inactivated parenteral vaccines prevented unspecified clinically defined influenza, and inactivated parenteral vaccines prevented specified clinically defined influenza (Table). Live aerosol and inactivated parenteral vaccines prevented serologically confirmed influenza (Table). No studies of inactivated aerosol reported serologically confirmed influenza. Vaccine and placebo did not differ for working days lost (3 trials), hospitalizations (1 trial), or complications (2 trials). Local tenderness and soreness were increased in patients who received inactivated parenteral vaccine (Table). No increase occurred in systemic myalgia, fever, or fatigue.

CONCLUSION
Inactivated parenteral vaccines are effective in preventing influenza in healthy adults.

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For correspondence: Dr. V. Demicheli, Servizio Sovrazionale di Epidemiologia, Alessandria, Piemonte, Italy. E-mail epidem@tin.it.

| Vaccines vs placebo for preventing influenza in healthy adults at mean 87 days* |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Outcomes                  | Comparisons       | Weighted event rates | Number of trials | RRR (95% CI) | NNH (CI) |
| CDI unspecified           | IA vs placebo     | 7.2% vs 20%          | 1                | 65% (32 to 82) | 8 (4 to 63) |
|                           | IP vs placebo     | 17% vs 21%           | 5                | 31% (5 to 51) | 25 (13 to 250) |
| CDI specified             | IP vs placebo     | 45% vs 53%           | 4                | 26% (1 to 45) | 13 (8 to 29) |
| SCI                       | IA vs placebo     | 0.7% vs 8.5%         | 2                | 79% (44 to 92) | Not significant |
|                           | IP vs placebo     | 2.9% vs 8.7%         | 4                | 65% (44 to 79) | 18 (12 to 34) |
| Local adverse events      | IP vs placebo     | 64% vs 35%           | 4                | 113% (35 to 236) | 4 (3 to 7) |

*CDI = clinically defined influenza; IA = inactivated aerosol vaccine; IP = inactivated parenteral vaccine; LA = live aerosol vaccine; SCI = serologically confirmed influenza. Other abbreviations defined in Glossary; RRR, RRI, NNT, NNH, and CI calculated from data in article using random effects.

COMMENTARY
Influenza vaccine is clearly cost-effective in elderly persons and those with chronic cardiac or respiratory disease. It reduces hospitalization, respiratory mortality, and all-cause mortality (1). Important potential benefits also exist in vaccinating healthy adults between 18 and 64 years of age and that assessed protection from exposure to naturally occurring influenza. This review confirms that the inactivated influenza vaccine is an effective method for preventing influenza in healthy adults. When the influenza vaccine supply permits, healthy young adults would benefit by receiving the inactivated influenza vaccine.

Peter A. Grou, MD
Hackensack University Medical Center
Hackensack, New Jersey, USA

References

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