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THE POSTNEWSLINE.COM

Cameroon: New Vaccine Introduced in Immunization Campaign

Daniel Gwarbarah

2 February 2009

A new vaccine against type "B" haemophilus influenzae has been added to four others used in Cameroon to fight against avoidable diseases such as tetanus, viral Hepatitis "B", measles and poliomyelitis.

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The addition of the new vaccine brings up the number of vaccines from one to five used by the Extended Immunization Programme in the country. The introduction of the new vaccine was announced at an information forum January 30, by the Minister of Public Health, André Mama Fouda.



The forum brought together the media, stakeholders and international organisations involved in the vaccination chain. The use of the new vaccine started February 1, in all the health units in the country authorised to vaccinate children short-listed by the Extended Immunization Programme.

The children targeted are those between the ages of zero and 11 months. According to the Minister, the vaccine would be administered following the usual calendar of six weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks after birth.

Stating that the introduction of the new vaccine fulfils the aspirations of the government, Mama Fouda said type "B" haemophilus influenzae is a major cause of meningitis in children of five years and below.

The mortality rate in this bracket of children, according to the Minister, is between 20 to 60 percent of hospitalised cases. He said 15 to 35 percent of the cases suffer irreversible health damages such as paralysis, retarded mental development, deafness and difficulties to study.

Quoting a study sponsored by the World Health Organisation, WHO, and conducted at the Mother and Child Centre of the Chantal Biya Foundation, Mama Fouda said Cameroon is one of the countries in which these infections are severe.

He said the study indicates that close to half of the meningitis cases in the Centre are due to type "B" haemophilus influenzae and attacks close to 60 percent of children between two to 13 months.

The Minister noted further that out of 165 children attacked by the disease, four die and 15 suffered from irreversible health damages. According to WHO estimates, in the absence of vaccination, some 400,000 children die each year because of

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