# Meningitis Vaccine Shows Surprise Modest Protection Against Gonorrhea

The vaccine may inform future research into a gonorrhea-specific vax.

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A broad effort to distribute a vaccine against meningitis B among young people in New Zealand unexpectedly resulted in a modest reduction in gonorrhea infections, MedPage Today reports. The 31 percent reduction in gonorrhea diagnoses among those vaccinated has stirred interest in using the vaccine to inform development of a gonorrhea-specific vaccine.

The new study emerges just as the World Health Organization (WHO) has sounded a major alarm about the emergence of drug-resistant gonorrhea worldwide, including three known cases that have proved untreatable.

Public health officials in New Zealand instigated a campaign between 2004 and 2006 to vaccinate individuals younger than age 20 with a meningitis B vaccine known as MeNZB, a vaccine that was still available through 2008.

Publishing their findings in the Lancet Infectious Diseases, researchers analyzed data of a case-control study of New Zealanders born between 1984 and 1998 who were attendees at one of 11 sexually transmitted infection (STI) clinics, who were diagnosed with gonorrhea, chlamydia or both and who were eligible to receive the meningitis B vaccine.

The researchers defined those who were diagnosed with gonorrhea but not chlamydia as their control group and those diagnosed with chlamydia but not gonorrhea as the so-called case group.

Out of 15,067 individuals, 15,090 were diagnosed with chlaymdia, 1,759 with gonorrhea and 1,329 with both STIs between 2004 and 2014. The researchers excluded those who were diagnosed with repeat STIs or who had gaps in their related data. This left 1,241 cases, 12,487 controls and 1,002 people with dual diagnoses.

Those who received the meningitis B vaccine made up a smaller proportion of the case group compared with the control group. A total of 511 of the 1,241 cases (41 percent) were vaccinated while 6,424 of the 12,487 controls (51 percent) were vaccinated.

After adjusting the data for ethnicity, poverty, geographical area and sex, the investigators found

that the MeNZB vaccine was associated with a 31 percent reduction in gonorrhea diagnoses. They also found that the effectiveness of the vaccine waned over time.

To read the MedPage Today article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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