



Event Update on Rabies and Immunoglobulin Service: a) Updated rabies post-exposure treatment guidance b) Reduction in the number of sites holding immunoglobulin products for post exposure prophylaxis c) RIGS Contact details

Notified by National Infection Service (PHE Colindale)

Authorised by Gayatri Amirthalingam, Sue Ibbotson

Contact Rabies and Immunoglobulin Service RIGS@phe.gov.uk

PHE NIERP Level n/a

Incident Lead n/a

The Rabies and Immunoglobulin Service (RIGS) based at Colindale is a cross divisional service providing clinical advice and risk assessments for health care professionals for a number of vaccine preventable diseases and serious infections including, botulinum, diphtheria, hepatitis A and B, measles, rabies, rubella and varicella. Post-exposure guidance is available through the Green Book, and on disease specific sites on the government website. Since 1st September 2020 Colindale does not hold any immunoglobulin, anti-toxin or vaccines on site. All products are held centrally by Movianto and a limited number of issuing centres around the country. Immunoglobulin, anti-toxin and vaccine requested through Colindale will be distributed to end-users using Immform, the same delivery service used in primary care to deliver routine vaccines. In order for rabies post-exposure treatment to be started promptly, in September 2020 all NHS Trusts were requested to hold a small number (up to 4 per site) or have access to rabies vaccine through the pharmaceutical emergency supply process (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916120/Rabies_vaccine_letter_for_AE_consultants_and_pharmacists_Sep2020.pdf)

Background and Latest Updates:

- **Updated rabies post-exposure guidance**

All published guidelines are kept under regular review and updated as needed. The current guidelines have been updated to reflect the changes to the importation of dogs and cats now that the UK is no longer within the EU, revised advice on handling dead bats and updated guidance on patients defined as being immunosuppressed and needing human rabies immunoglobulin, 5 doses of vaccine and confirmation of positive rabies serology (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabies-post-exposure-prophylaxis-management-guidelines>).

- **Reduction in the number of sites holding immunoglobulin products**

With the lockdowns and reduced social mixing, many infectious diseases have seen a marked reduction in numbers or cases, with a corresponding decrease in the amount of immunoglobulin that has been issued for post exposure prophylaxis. This has resulted in many centres discarding more expired product than administered to patients. In order to reduce wastage of these expensive blood products the number of centres holding immunoglobulins (human normal immunoglobulin (HNIG), hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG), human rabies immunoglobulin (HRIG) and varicella-zoster immunoglobulin (VZIG) are being reduced with low levels of stock being held at the regional public health laboratories in Birmingham, Cambridge and Manchester and the bulk of the vials held at Movianto. All requests for immunoglobulins should be directed to the Rabies and Immunoglobulin Service (Tel: 0330 128 1020) between the hours of 9 am and 5.30 pm. Immunoglobulin products will not be issued outside these hours.

PHE/UK HSA does not hold tetanus immunoglobulin or intravenous immunoglobulin products which should be ordered by NHS Trusts from the manufacturers. (See Tetanus Green Book chapter: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/859519/Greenbook_chapter_30_Tetanus_January_2020.pdf)

- **Rabies and Immunoglobulin Service contact details**

RIGS operates between 8am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday. All requests for product and advice about issuing should be directed to this service (Tel: 0330 128 1020). Requests for immunoglobulin/vaccine



will generally be ordered through Immform for delivery to a named responsible clinician to arrive before 2pm the next working day.

Outside these hours request for clinical advice will be directed through the Colindale Duty Doctor service from 9 am to 7 pm at weekends and bank holidays. Most issues can wait until the next day, so callers after 5:30 pm are encouraged to call back the next morning to speak to RIgS or the Colindale Duty Doctor service.

If immunoglobulins are required out of working hours and cannot wait till the next working day, the product may be able to be collected from one of the three local stock-holders (Cambridge, Birmingham or Manchester) or be issued out of hours for delivery the next day. Arrangements for urgent delivery on non-working days should be made by calling the Duty Doctor through the RIGS service between 9 am and 7 pm.

Requests for issuing diphtheria and botulinum anti-toxin are unchanged, and should be made through the Colindale Duty Doctors including out of hours if necessary.

More information on the hours and service provided through RIGS is provided on the RIGS page at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immunoglobulin-when-to-use/rabies-and-immunoglobulin-rigs-changes-to-the-current-service>

Recommendations and Implications for PHE /UK HSA Centres

HPTs are asked to be aware of the updated rabies guidance, the current arrangements for contacting RIgS (0330 128 1020), and the arrangements for issuing immunoglobulin products both in and out of hours through the RIgS team at Colindale. Whereas immunoglobulins including rabies Immunoglobulin is only available locally in three regional public health laboratories (Cambridge, Birmingham and Manchester), rabies vaccine should be accessible vial their local trusts. HPTs should be aware of the availability of rabies vaccine in their area so that patients can be appropriately directed.

Recommendations and Implications for PHE/ UK HSA sites and services

Lead Public Health Microbiologists are asked to share information with other microbiologists and relevant clinicians on the updated rabies guidance, the current arrangements for contacting RIgS (0330 128 1020) and the arrangements for issuing immunoglobulin products through Colindale both in and out of hours. Whereas immunoglobulins including rabies Immunoglobulin is only available locally in three regional public health laboratories (Cambridge, Birmingham and Manchester), rabies vaccine should be accessible vial their local trusts. PHE sites should be aware of the availability of rabies vaccine in their area so that patients can be appropriately directed.

Implications and recommendations for local authorities

Local Authority Directors of Public Health are asked to cascade this information to GPs and acute trusts in their area to ensure they are aware of the new arrangements for rabies post exposure guidance and issuing immunoglobulin products

References/ Sources of information

Updated rabies post-exposure treatment

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabies-post-exposure-prophylaxis-management-guidelines>

Updated RIGS information and hours of service

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immunoglobulin-when-to-use/rabies-and-immunoglobulin-rigs-changes-to-the-current-service>

Letter to A & E departments and pharmacists about the need to hold local rabies vaccine

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916120/Rabies_vaccine_letter_for_AE_consultants_and_pharmacists_Sep2020.pdf