



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

A Call to Protect the Children of Malaysia:

Sign the pledge and get pneumococcal vaccine into the National Immunisation Programme of Malaysia.

KUALA LUMPUR, 17th February 2012 – 70% to 80% of Malaysian children continue to be unprotected against Pneumococcal Disease.¹ This number is alarming and startling for a country like Malaysia who has one of the best health care systems in the region and who has yet to include the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) into the National Immunisation Programme (NIP).

Pneumococcal Disease is a complex group of illnesses caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.² This bacterium causes invasive infections which include bacteraemia/sepsis (bacterial infections of the blood), meningitis (inflammation of the membrane surrounding the spinal cord or brain), pneumonia (lung inflammation) and otitis media (media ear infection)³ which can often lead to death or disability.

The *Aim For Broader Coverage (ABC)* Campaign calls upon Malaysians to support the inclusion of the PCV into the NIP by signing the pledge at www.abc4pneumococcal.com.

The incidences of Pneumococcal Disease continue to rise globally and South East Asia has the highest number of pneumococcal cases and the highest number of fatalities.⁴ This is due to lack of disease awareness around pneumococcal disease⁵ combined with difficulties in accurately diagnosing

¹ Dr. Musa, A shield for our young, The Star. 13 November 2011

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Invasive pneumococcal disease in children 5 years after conjugate vaccine introduction-eight states, 1998-2005. *Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2008;57:144-148.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prevention of Pneumococcal disease: recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). *MMWR.* 1997;46(RR-8):1-24

⁴ Katherine L O'Brien, Lara J Wolfson, James P Watt, Emily Henkle, Maria Deloria-Knoll, Natalie McCall, Ellen Lee, Kim Mulholland, Orin S Levine, Thomas Cherian, for the Hib and Pneumococcal Global Burden of Disease Study Team, 2009.

⁵ UNICEF/WHO. Pneumonia: The forgotten killer of children, 2006. MICS and Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) data from 33 Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) conducted between 1999-2001.

pneumococcal infections that make it difficult to manage from a public health perspective.

However in this case, prevention is better than cure, and ultimately the prevention of pneumococcal disease is a safer and more cost-effective option in comparison to the serious consequences of being infected by Pneumococcal Disease.

The ABC campaign, a cohesive collaboration between Pfizer Malaysia and the Asian Strategic Alliance for Pneumococcal Disease Prevention (ASAP) as well as parenting portals such as Parenting2u, Pitter Patter and SJ Echo, was launched in June 2011 in order to build awareness on Pneumococcal Disease and emphasise the fact that the disease is preventable via vaccination. As an extension of this campaign, the Aim for Broader Coverage (ABC) Parent Coalition was formed to create advocacy among the parents of Malaysia.

According to Datuk Dr. Zulkifli Ismail, founding member of ASAP, Past President of the Malaysian Paediatric Association and President Elect of the Asia Pacific Pediatric Association, "Pneumococcal disease is a vaccine-preventable cause of death. Immunisation is the most efficient and effective way of reducing mortality rates from Pneumococcal Disease. Morbidity related to loss of work days for parents resulting from pneumococcal pneumonia can also be reduced. It is important that this vaccine become a part of our NIP so that all Malaysian children will have access to protection against this potentially crippling disease."

"Despite the publicity, many parents remain unaware of the complications and seriousness of Pneumococcal Disease, hence political will is necessary in implementing this important healthcare protection for children. We hope to mobilise parents and like-minded individuals to sign the pledge and demonstrate their concern that so many children of Malaysia continue to remain unprotected against this debilitating disease," said Chan Li Jin, co-founder of Parenting2u.com, one of the parent groups that is leading the ABC Parent Coalition during the media conference at the Ti Ratana Welfare Society, where 47 children were provided free PCV with the broadest protection. These vaccinations were administered by Dr. Low Kok Thye, who is a member of the ABC Parent Coalition. Together with his colleagues from Klinik Medijaya, they have generously contributed their time and medical expertise to the vaccination exercise.

"Every parent knows the heartache and inconvenience of caring for a sick child. What's worse is that the effects of Pneumococcal Disease may not be apparent immediately but may manifest many years later, such as deafness, inability to walk, talk or learn like normal children. If parents only knew that Pneumococcal disease can be prevented, they would be spared of these sometimes lifelong hardships," she added.

Guided by the medical experts in ASAP, the ABC Parent Coalition plans to launch a research study that is going to provide quantitative and qualitative data to identify the emotional and financial consequences of Pneumococcal Disease in Malaysia. This research seeks to collect specific quantifiable data to showcase the financial burden of treating pneumococcal disease, while demonstrating the emotional burden that families go through.

Also in attendance at the media conference, were celebrity advocates Daphne Iking, Sazzy Falak and Aishah Sinclair who took the time to share their support for the inclusion of PCV into the NIP. The celebrities urged the Malaysian public to log on to www.abc4pneumococcal.com to learn more about pneumococcal disease and sign the pledge.

Many other countries have started to recognise the importance of pneumococcal vaccination in promoting the well-being of children. More than 53 countries have included PCV with the broadest protection against 13 strains of bacteria into their NIPs including Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Malaysia is known for its comprehensive healthcare system which is comparable to developed nations and the inclusion of PCV into its NIP should be of utmost priority to ensure continued access to for its citizens.

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About Aim for Broader Coverage Campaign

The ABC campaign is a cohesive collaboration between Pfizer Malaysia and the Asian Strategic Alliance for Pneumococcal Disease Prevention (ASAP) as well as parenting portals such as Parenting2u, Pitter Patter and SJ Echo.

The main aim of the ABC 4 Pneumococcal Campaign is to create awareness of the dangers of Pneumococcal Disease and rally parents together to fight this potentially fatal disease. Despite the high mortality and morbidity rates caused by Pneumococcal Disease worldwide, many parents are still unaware of this disease that can affect the entire family and put them at risk of losing a child's life.

Being aware of the dangers of Pneumococcal Disease empowers parents to make the informed choices where prevention and protection is concerned. Parents are encouraged to make a united stand against Pneumococcal Disease by supporting the Call for Action in Pneumococcal Disease prevention.

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small molecule medicines and vaccines in Biopharmaceuticals, as well as a wide range of Nutritional products.

We also collaborate closely with public and private health care providers, and communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care in Malaysia. Pfizer Malaysia began operations in 1964, and every day, some 500 colleagues throughout the country work to advance wellness and make a difference for all who rely on us.

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