

**NOTE:
New Address!!**

WHO Reiterates Support of Oral Polio Vaccine

"The eradication from the world can only be achieved using oral polio vaccine," said Dr. Jong-Wook Lee, Director of the Global Program for Vaccines, commenting on a decision by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States of America to recommend adding two doses of injectable polio vaccine (IPV) to the national immunization schedule.

"The core group working towards global polio eradication, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), CDC and Rotary International, emphasize that oral polio vaccine (OPV) is recommended because it can provide both individual protection to each child, as well as prevent the spread of the poliovirus to other children," points out Dr. Lee. At US\$ 0.08 per dose, the cost of a single dose of OPV procured by UNICEF is less than one tenth the cost of a dose of IPV.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) statement applies only to the United States where the last case of naturally occurring polio was registered more than 15 years ago. WHO reaffirms its position that OPV alone is the basis for the global eradication of polio, and that the addition of IPV is neither necessary nor recommended for this purpose.

The ACIP meeting at the Centers for Disease Control voted on Wednesday (October 18), to change the immunization schedule in the United States to two doses of injectable polio vaccine and two doses of oral polio vaccine. In their recommendation, the ACIP affirmed its support for WHO's initiative to eradicate polio and noted that the eradication of polio was achieved in the United States through the exclusive use of the oral polio vaccine.

"The change in ACIP's position seems to be based on fears of polio caused by the vaccine," says Dr. Lee. "Vaccine associated polio occurs at a rate of about one case per three million doses administered." The new

ACIP strategy will prevent only about half of the five to ten cases of vaccine associated polio in the United States each year at a cost of approximately US\$ 20 million.

WHO estimates that as many as 100,000 cases of polio occurred worldwide in 1994. The initiative to eradicate polio seeks to destroy totally the wild (naturally occurring) polio virus from the entire world by the year 2000. When the disease is eradicated, immunization against polio will no longer be necessary. The United States will save at least US\$230 million each year after polio is eradicated and immunization is stopped. The global savings from polio eradication are expected to total at least US\$ 1.5 billion per year. □

Source: *EPI Newsletter* (Expanded Program on Immunization)
Pan American Health Organization, Washington, DC 20037 USA

Proposed Flat Tax on Vaccines

U.S. Congress is now considering a flat tax on vaccines. The tax is levied by Congress to fund awards made under the Vaccine Injury Compensation Act of 1988 following adjudication of claims for injuries as a result of public health immunization programs.

The proposed flat tax is 51 cents per antigen/disease. Under the proposal, the current tax on diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and pertussis (DTP) vaccine of \$4.56 per dose would drop to \$1.53 per dose — 51 cents for each antigen. Both oral and inactivated poliomyelitis vaccines, which currently are taxed 29 cents per dose each, would have their tax increased to 51 cents.

Excerpted from *JAMA*, November 15, 1995 —
Vol. 274, No. 19.