Interchangeability of vaccines (vaccine mixing)

Interchangeability of vaccines

Policy positions:

1. The Canadian Medical Association recognizes the use of vaccines in the immunization of individuals and groups of people in a manner that maximizes its effectiveness and safety. Interchangeability of vaccines is a fundamental principle of good vaccination practices. Whether interchangeability is described as 'mixing' or 'switching' vaccines, it occurs when a different vaccine is administered to an individual or group in place of the vaccine that was previously recommended. This principle is consistent with the World Health Organization's (WHO) guidance on vaccine interchangeability and their position that vaccine interchangeability is an important tool in the prevention of disease and the control of outbreaks.

2. It is important to consider the following when deciding whether to interchange vaccines:
   - The type of vaccine being considered for interchangeability.
   - The age of the individual or group being vaccinated.
   - The reason for interchangeability (e.g., shortage of a specific vaccine).
   - The clinical setting in which interchangeability will be used.

Recommendations:

1. In the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to have a clear understanding of the potential benefits and risks associated with the use of different vaccines in a population. This includes understanding the efficacy and safety profiles of different vaccines and the potential for vaccine interactions.
   - The Canadian Medical Association recommends that healthcare providers consider the following when evaluating the interchangeability of vaccines:
     - The possibility of a vaccine switching strategy that uses different vaccines to provide the same level of protection.
     - The potential for vaccine switching to increase the number of people who can be vaccinated.
     - The potential for vaccine switching to reduce the burden on healthcare systems.

2. It is important to consider the following when designing a vaccine switching strategy:
   - The potential for vaccine switching to increase the number of people who can be vaccinated.
   - The potential for vaccine switching to reduce the burden on healthcare systems.
   - The potential for vaccine switching to increase the effectiveness of vaccines.

Interchangeability guidelines:

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2. It is important to consider the following when designing a vaccine switching strategy:
   - The potential for vaccine switching to increase the number of people who can be vaccinated.
   - The potential for vaccine switching to reduce the burden on healthcare systems.
   - The potential for vaccine switching to increase the effectiveness of vaccines.