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Strategies and Challenges Involved in the Eradication of Rubella; Justification for Inclusion of Rubella Vaccine in Nigeria's National Program on Immunization

Abstract

Rubella is also known as German measles. Rubella is caused by a togavirus which spreads by droplet infection. One attack confers a high degree of immunity. It tends to infect older children, adolescents and young adults and spreads less readily than measles. The incubation period is usually about 18 days. In children, the disease is trivial. In adults, the illness may be more severe, but of short duration and of little importance except when it develops in a woman during the first four months of pregnancy. In such cases, the risk of being born with congenital malformations can be as high as 80%. These congenital malformations usually consist of deafness, congenital heart disease, cataracts as well as other abnormalities. There is no licensed cure for rubella. However, immunization can prevent the disease. As man is the only reservoir, it is possible to eradicate it. Active vaccine against rubella can be given as a rubella containing vaccine in the MMR vaccine or it can be given alone as rubella vaccine. In Nigeria, the cost of caring for a child with congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) has not been quantified but in Jamaica, it is 13,483 US dollars per annum per child apart from the psychological toll on the families and community. Even if it cannot be eliminated in Nigeria, the burden of disease can be eased by including rubella vaccine in Nigeria's National Program on Immunization.

Keywords: Rubella, Congenital Malformations, Nigeria's National Program on Immunization,
Vaccine