The impact of COVID-19 on the immunisation programmes and how to correct the situation

Country perspective: Chile

ADVAC Alumni meeting
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1. Chile’s National Immunisation Programme in brief

2. Impact of COVID-19 on Chile immunisation programme:
   a. 2020 seasonal Influenza campaign
   b. 2020 routine immunisation uptake
   c. 2021 COVID-19 vaccination campaign
Chile’s National Immunisation Programme, CL-NIP

Deliverables

• Contribution to the eradication of vaccine preventable diseases.
• Vaccination coverage ≥95% (achieve and maintain). Real-time monitoring.
• Strengthened National Immunisation Register
• Immunisation network accountability (state, regional and local levels).
• Adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) and immunisation errors surveillance.
• Communication with the community & transparency.
• Ensure biologicals and immunisation supplies in a timely manner.
• Technical cooperation strategic alliances.
Impact of COVID-19 on Chile immunisation programme

a. 2020 Seasonal Influenza Campaign

• Seasonal influenza vaccination campaign implemented annually since 1982.
  → Aims:
  – Deaths and serious morbidity prevention in high-risk groups
  – Health system integrity preservation

• Annual increase of influenza vaccines made available during the campaign
  → Local demographic and epidemiological changes
  → New safety and immunogenicity evidence of vaccines

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a. 2020 Seasonal Influenza Campaign

• In 2020, the influenza campaign had to be re-planned while in progress due to the addition of new high-risk groups to be vaccinated in accordance with the national SARS-CoV-2 pandemic health alert requirements.

• CL-NIP increased the available doses of influenza vaccines by nearly 20% thus guaranteeing high-risk groups access to State funded influenza vaccination.

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a. 2020 Seasonal Influenza Campaign

- Chile Health Authorities called seasonal influenza risk groups to adhere to vaccination promptly and this way avoid SARS-CoV-2 coinfection.
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a. 2020 Seasonal Influenza Campaign

Lessons learnt:

• Scheduled access to 2021 influenza vaccination: State level coordination of a vaccination calendar by risk group, i.e. age, essential occupations, comorbidities.

• New risks groups introduced during 2020 remained part of 2021 seasonal influenza campaign target population (42% Chilean population).

https://www.minsal.cl/campana-influenza-2021/
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b. 2020 Routine immunisation
Impact of COVID-19 on Chile immunisation programme

b. 2020 Routine immunisation

Findings:

1. Routine immunisation demand decreased compared to previous non-pandemic years, with the exception of adult pneumococcal vaccination.

- Immunisation access disruptions during SARS-CoV-2 pandemic: reluctance to leave home due to fear of infection, travel restrictions, domestic migration to spend lockdown periods with family/rural areas, health workers re-deployment to COVID-19 response.

  → CL-NIP increased availability of health workers deployed to immunisation services during the pandemic.

- CL-NIP leadership and management accumulated experience has been preserved and the team could be considered as a consolidated.
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b. 2020 Routine immunisation

Actions taken:

- Catch-up strategy called on seasonal Influenza risk groups that overlap with routine immunisation target groups to update their routine immunisation vaccination status during the Influenza vaccination appointment.

- Optimising the opportunity for routine vaccination in children from 6 months through 10 years of age (5th grade), adults ≥ 65 years, pregnant women, and persons with comorbidities from 11 through 64 years of age who were targeted for seasonal influenza vaccination as well ≈ 8.3 million population.

- If further catch-up interventions needed, second catch-up strategy for children could be deployed during 2021 school extramural vaccination (second semester).
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b. 2020 Routine immunisation

Findings:

2. Non-simultaneous routine vaccination was observed at 12 and 18 months

   • Dropout between early and final doses of the primary vaccine series may indicate barriers to reattendance including those that stem from pandemic control measures, need for education reinforcement to parents on immunisation timeliness, inadequate tracking of clients registered at the health facility, deficiencies in vaccine stock monitoring, reluctance to vaccinate a sick child or to administer multiple vaccines at the same visit, amongst other factors.

Actions taken:

   o CL-NIP will design, pilot and later conduct a survey among health care providers to explore factors potentially related to missed opportunities of simultaneous vaccination.
Impact of COVID-19 on Chile immunisation programme
c. 2021 COVID-19 vaccination campaign

Most significant challenges and successes Chile has encountered in vaccine procurement

- Cross-cutting challenges: time necessary for vaccine research and development, proved safety & efficacy + limited capacity for vaccine manufacturing + international demand

- Success: diversification of vaccine access opportunities
  
  a. Research and development collaborations between a national consortium of universities and vaccine developers.

  b. Direct commercial negotiations between the International Affairs Secretary and vaccine manufacturers.

  c. To have joined the COVAX initiative under the “Optional Purchase” arrangement.
Logistical challenges Chile has overcome in vaccination roll-out

- Cold room to point of vaccination distribution of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine

Vaccine waste: 0.5%
(range 5%-10%)
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c. 2021 COVID-19 vaccination campaign

Useful practices that have emerged

Cold chain validation:


3. Passive refrigeration standardisation: isothermal containers designed by CL-NIP distributed nationally to each vaccination point.
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c. 2021 COVID-19 vaccination campaign

Challenges faced in developing effective prioritisation plans

• Immunisation strategy decision-making:
  ii. Ultimate decision made by the Ministry of Health.
  iii. Challenge: reception by external interest groups
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c. 2021 COVID-19 vaccination campaign

Challenges faced in developing effective prioritisisation plans

Scheduled access to COVID-19 vaccination: State level coordination of a vaccination calendar by risk group, i.e age, essential occupations, comorbidities.

https://www.minsal.cl/calendario-de-vacunacion-masiva-contra-covid-19/
Impact of COVID-19 on Chile immunisation programme
c. 2021 COVID-19 vaccination campaign

How has the emergence of variants of concern affected Chile’s vaccination strategy or its vaccine choices?

- As for all other vaccine preventable diseases, the local epidemiological context informs COVID-19 immunization-related policy decision-making.
- SARS-CoV-2 variants surveillance.
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Chile’s approaches to addressing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy

• Systematic and real-time monitoring of vaccine coverage → National immunisation register.

• AEFI and immunisation-related error surveillance.
  → Prompt strategic response to COVID-19 vaccines AEFI – Chile NITAG guidance on immunisation strategies against COVID-19 vaccines AEFI

• Communication strategy, including a daily TV report by health authorities.

• Early response to the public’s demand for information.
Impact of COVID-19 on Chile immunisation programme
c. 2021 COVID-19 vaccination campaign

What approaches has Chile promoted or could be encouraged to support in relation to the global distribution of vaccines?

• Chile’s participation in COVAX
• Chile’s COVID-19 vaccines donation to Ecuador and Paraguay.
• Chile covered for the COVID-19 vaccines shipping to Uruguay (Beijing-Montevideo).
Impact/legacy that the COVID vaccination campaign may have on the routine immunisation programme

- COVID-19 vaccination campaign experience is in process of building.
  - Booster dose?
  - Seasonal vaccination? Universal or prioritised groups?
  - SARS-CoV-2 variants
  - Vaccine manufacturing and distribution
  - Global access to COVID-19 vaccines

- New good practices introduced
- Coverage corrective actions
- CL-NIP assessment → recommendations for growth, development and strengthening
- Long term impact...
Thank you

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