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THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

27 Feb 98

**MEMORANDUM FOR:**

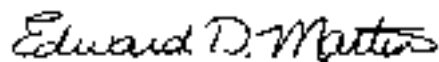
**SURGEON GENERAL OF THE ARMY  
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY  
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE**

**SUBJECT:** Policy on Use and Interchangeability of Licensed Adult Hepatitis A Vaccines

The Department of Defense recently entered into a contract with Merck & Co., Inc. to provide its licensed adult hepatitis A vaccine, inactivated, (*VAQTA*) to the Military Health System. SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals also markets a licensed adult hepatitis A vaccine, inactivated, (*Havrix*). *VAQTA* is available as a Prime Vendor item.

Military treatment facilities shall use the contracted item, *VAQTA*, for hepatitis A immunization programs for adults. The new contract is a requirements contract; therefore, the Merck vaccine *VAQTA* must be procured by MHS activities for administration to any adult who is receiving the first dose in a hepatitis A vaccine series. However, existing supplies of *Havrix* may be used until consumed or outdated.

With respect to persons who have begun an immunization series with *Havrix*, either *VAQTA* or existing supplies of *Havrix* may be used to complete the immunization series. In a January 22, 1997 memorandum, the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board (AFEB) stated that "...the hepatitis A vaccines from the two manufacturers can be considered to be comparably immunogenic and interchangeable. Either vaccine can be used to complete an immunization series begun with the other." Our review of preliminary data from an ongoing study supports this recommendation. We are unaware of any data on the interchangeability of *VAQTA* and *Havrix* that support a contrary view.



Edward D. Martin, M.D.  
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense

**HA Policy 98-023**

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