

Vaccine adverse events in Australia

David Isaacs

Children's Hospital at Westmead

Reporting adverse events

Adverse events following immunisation (AEFIs)

“Associated with” immunisation

Local reaction: “definite”

Fever post-MMR: “probable”

Cough post-flu: “possible”

Finnish twin study

(Peltola H et al Lancet 1986; i: 939-42)

581 twin pairs

Double blind, placebo controlled trial

	<u>Initial</u>	<u>3 weeks later</u>
Twin 1	MMR	Placebo
Twin 2	Placebo	MMR

Finnish twin study

Symptoms at 9 – 10 days

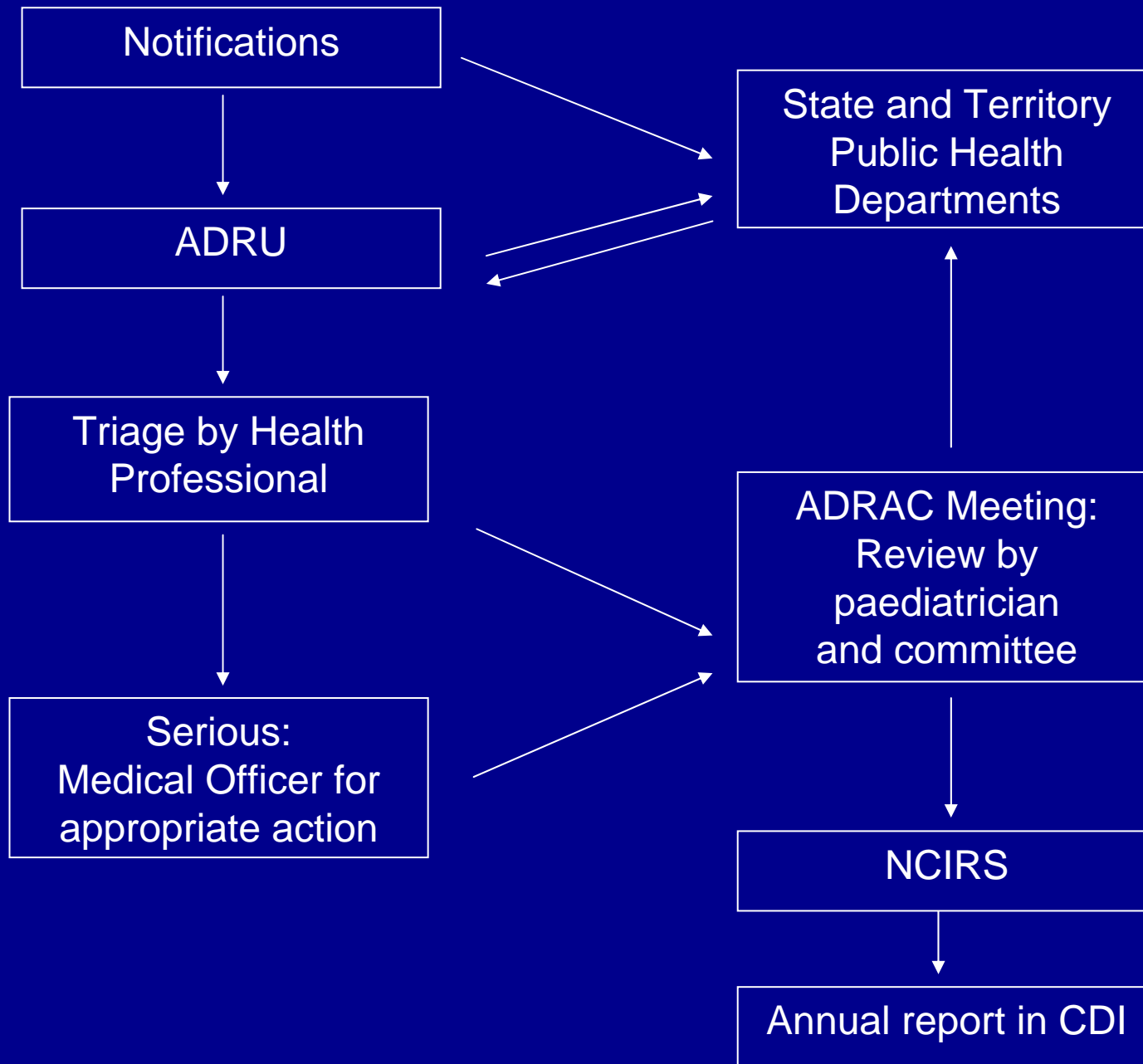
	<u>MMR</u>	<u>Placebo</u>
Mild fever <38.5°C	2%	2%
High fever >39.5 °C	1.5%	0.1%
Rash	4.9%	3%
Cough or cold	1.7%	1.8%
GI symptoms	1.4%	1.4%

AEFI reporting in Australia

Before 2000: States and Territories

Since 2000: National scheme

Adverse Drug Reactions Unit, Canberra
(ADRU)



AEFI reports

Glenda Lawrence, epidemiologist from NCIRS

Communicable Disease Intelligence

CDI 2003; 27: 307 - 23

CDI 2004; 28: 324 - 38

CDI 2005; 29: In press

WHO definition of serious AEFIs

Recovered with sequelae

Hospital admission

Seen in Emergency Dept

Life-threatening event

Death

AEFIs in Australia, 2000 - 2004

Number of reports 5128

“Serious” 490

Recovered with sequelae 7

“probable or definite” (4)

Deaths 14

“due to immunisation” (1)

Conclusion

About one case per year
will merit compensation

Should Australia introduce a vaccine injury compensation scheme?

In favour: Justice

Equity

Avoiding culture of blame

Improving confidence

Justice

- Society expects us to immunise ourselves and our children
- Vaccines occasionally cause serious damage
- No-one's fault when damage occurs
- Compensation is only just

Equity

- Efficient national health service
- Difficult to compensate for:
 - out of pocket expenses
 - hidden expenses
 - pain and suffering

Litigation and culture of blame

Vaccine injuries unpredictable

No-one's fault

Litigation and blame inappropriate

Compensation scheme improves confidence

Public

Providers

Vaccine companies

Time for a vaccine compensation theme in Australia?

- Would need to compensate one person a year
- Would need a committee to assess claims
- A vaccine compensation scheme is the ethical way to go