



Recipients of the ACWY vaccine with their vaccination certificates.

RELEGATING MENINGOCOCCAL TO THE PAGES OF HISTORY

PAST president of the Rotary Club of Gosnells, WA, Dr Brian Vale has launched a project to have every person in the world vaccinated against meningococcal disease.

Until quite recently, meningococcal was considered a disease of young children and adolescents.

Current statistics for Western Australia, however, reveal that nearly one quarter of the cases in 2017 were in adults 60 years of age and older, and over one half of cases were in people 20 years of age and older.

In the whole of Australia, there were 382 cases of meningococcal disease in 2017, which was more than a 50 per cent increase from 2016 (252 cases) and more than double the number of cases from 2015 (182 cases).

As a counter measure, free vaccinations for children aged between one and four, and 15- to

19-year-olds, have been introduced throughout Australia.

“Older people have also been affected; the latest death in Australia was a 71-year-old,” Dr Vale said.

“Dr Vale and his Rotary club are working closely with the Amanda Young Foundation to continue research in prevention, treatment and awareness of this dreadful disease.”

Dr Vale’s message is for everyone to be vaccinated against the ACWY strains of meningococcal, and this applies to every adult not vaccinated and every other person who has been partially vaccinated with either the B or C strains.

Since launching his campaign, Dr Vale has found that many GPs and parents are unaware of the risk to adults. In fact, some GPs have refused to provide a script for people over 70 years of age – sad when you consider the facts.

Dr Vale and his Rotary club are working closely with the Amanda Young Foundation, established 20 years ago in WA, to continue research in prevention, treatment and awareness of this dreadful disease.

One major complication is that the disease presents in a variety of symptoms, examples being a skin rash or influenza, and this can make early diagnosis quite difficult. The bacteria is present in about 20 per cent of “normal” people and is contained in saliva and nasal discharge.

More importantly, there is emerging evidence that the bacterial organism is becoming resistant to the most effective antibiotic. This surely means that vaccination is imperative.

Vaccinate, don’t procrastinate.