Shingrix – a new shingles vaccine

A new herpes zoster (shingles) vaccine has just been approved for use in Canada. It is an adjuvanted non-live recombinant zoster vaccine indicated for prevention of shingles in people aged 50 years of age and older.¹,²

Benefits:
- The adjuvant increases the immune response leading to longer lasting and greater immunogenicity to the herpes zoster virus. Clinical trials showed greater than 90% efficacy in adults aged 50 and older and in those aged 70 and older. No loss of efficacy during the 4-year follow-up period has been observed.¹,²
- It is not a live vaccine. Although there are limited data available on the use in immunocompromised adults 50 years of age or older, immunosuppression is not a contraindication for its use.²
- In clinical trials, Shingrix showed 89% efficacy in preventing postherpetic neuralgia in patients 70 years and older.²

Limitations:
- Requires 2 doses. The second to be administered 2-6 months after the first.¹,²
- Must be stored in refrigerator.²
- Injection site reactions may be more severe than with Zostavax.³

Dosing:
- 0.5 ml IM – preferably in the deltoid. Administer at 0 and 2-6 months.²

Side effects¹,²:
- Most common: pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site. Most reactions in clinical trials were transient and mild to moderate in intensity, lasting fewer than 3 days.
  - headache
  - nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain
  - muscle pain
  - fatigue
  - chills, fever

Availability:
- Available as of Jan 2, 2018⁴

Cost:
- Wholesale: $132.35/injection⁵

Can Shingrix be given to someone who has previously received Zostavax®?
- Based on expert opinion, the U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) indicates that Shingrix can be administered to people who have previously received the Zostavax vaccine.⁶ Shingrix may be given as early as eight weeks after Zostavax [Evidence Level C], but would definitely be indicated if it has been more than five years since Zostavax was given, as most immunity is lost by then.⁷
References:
3. Canadian Pharmacist's Letter; December 2016; Vol: 32 Vaccines
4. Phone communication with GSK Customer Service Jan 2, 2018