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Patient Education about Influenza Vaccination

Michael Rodriguez

University of Vermont

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Patient Education about Influenza Vaccination

Michael Rodriguez, MS3
UVM Robert Larner College of Medicine
Problem Identification

- Benefits of flu shot (CDC)
  - prevents the flu or reduces severity of illness if still get sick
  - less flu-related deaths
  - reduced duration of hospitalization
  - decreased number of ICU admissions and decreased length of ICU stay (Cox, et al)

- And yet...
  - 46% of adults in Connecticut received influenza vaccine in 2017-18 (CDC)
  - Only 37% of adults (>18yo) in the US received influenza vaccine in 2017-18, down from 43% in 2016-17 (CDC)

Clearly there is a gap between the known benefits of the influenza vaccine, the risks of influenza, and the number of patients obtaining influenza vaccine.
Public Health Cost

- More than $10 billion spent annually on flu-related, direct healthcare costs (CDC)
- More flu-associated hospitalizations and deaths observed in CT during 2016-2017 season when compared to previous seasons (CT Dept of Health)
  - 65 flu-associated deaths in CT
  - 5-10% of ED visits were attributed to the flu
  - 2,500+ hospitalizations for flu-related illness
- 2 deaths in CT already this 2018-2019 season (CT Dept of Health)
- <40% of the US population gets the flu each year, responsible for 200,000+ hospitalizations annually in the US (CDC)
Community Perspective

- “There are so many myths about the flu and the flu vaccine. As health care providers, we could do a better job of educating our patients about the facts, highlighting risks and benefits, but time is limited during visits and other pressing issues often take precedent.” – MD, Brookfield Family Practice

- “During flu season, I spend at least 2-3 minutes during the interview speaking with patients about the importance of preventing the flu.” – APRN, Brookfield Family Practice

- “I try to dispel any rumors I overhear when patients visit our pharmacy for their influenza vaccine.” – local pharmacist, Walmart
Intervention / Methodology

- Educational flyer was created to address the most common concerns, myths or objections to receiving the influenza vaccine encountered during my rotation.
- Printed copies made available in exam rooms and electronic copies provided to health care providers.
- Flyer was written at a middle school reading level.
- This information was then reviewed with patients who refused to obtain annual influenza vaccine.
About half of adult patients (52%, 23 of 44) consented to receive the influenza vaccine after reviewing flyer and after a discussion about their concerns:

- “I didn’t realize I couldn’t get sick from the vaccine.”
- “I thought my intolerance to eggs would prevent me from getting the vaccine.”
- “Oh I figured it was a live virus vaccine.”
- “I’m not worried about the preservatives anymore.”
- “Even though I might still get the flu, I guess the shot is still worth a shot.”

Those that refused stated they were simply not interested or deferred in order to read more information before deciding.
Evaluation of Effectiveness / Limitations

- Patients reviewed the informational flyer and then had discussion with healthcare provider – unable to determine which was more impactful in their decision to obtain influenza vaccine
- Primarily focused on debunking certain myths about the flu, this flyer does not provide general information about symptoms, diagnosis or treatment of influenza
- Patients are inundated with forms to complete and many informational flyers already exist in waiting rooms and exam rooms
Recommendations for Future

- Incorporate educational information into the office’s influenza vaccine consent form
- Provide information about flu shot clinics in the community if patient is not interested in getting a flu shot in the office, but may change their mind
- Encourage education beyond the physician’s office
  - Schools
  - Employee health
  - Social media
  - Grocery stores / pharmacies
- This project could easily be expanded beyond this specific community
References