



Improving Adult Immunizations Rates in West Virginia: Pharmacists as Immunizers

Position: The West Virginia Immunization Network (WIN) supports enabling pharmacists, with appropriate training, to provide adult immunizations.

Adopted February 10, 2006

Pharmacists as Immunizers: Where are we?

- Currently 44 states currently have provisions for pharmacists to administer immunizations, including neighboring states of Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. (July 2005)
- The American College of Physicians- American Society of Internal Medicine “supports the use of the pharmacist as an immunization information source, host of immunizations sites and immunizer.” (ACP-ASIM position paper released January 2002 in Annals of Internal Medicine)
- Programs exist within West Virginia to train pharmacists to provide immunizations according to CDC guidelines.

Why pharmacists?

- Pharmacists have the knowledge, skill and information required to identify candidates for vaccination. Pharmacists can identify high-risk patients based on their medication use and/or knowledge of the patient’s specific conditions.
- Pharmacists are the most accessible health care providers.
- There are pharmacies located in almost every ZIP code in WV
- Pharmacy hours are advantageous for people who work or with busy schedules
- Pharmacist involvement in immunizations increases community immunization rates
- In states where pharmacists immunize, the number of vaccines administered has increased due to increased access and awareness
- In addition to total numbers of patients being immunized, the percentage of high risk patients being immunized has also increased.
- The vast majority of pharmacies utilize electronic health information systems that can be used to identify high-risk patients in need of immunizations
- The CDC recognized the value of pharmacist as immunization advocates and deliverers in an open letter to pharmacists in July 2001
- In the case of a bioterrorism event or other public health crisis, pharmacists can be another valuable public health resource if emergency vaccinations are required.

(Continued)



Do we need help in West Virginia?

- 32.1% of West Virginians over the age of 65 reported not having a flu shot in the past 12 months. (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; 2004)
- 35.2% of West Virginians over the age of 65 reported not ever having a pneumonia vaccination. (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; 2004)
- In 2003, there were 457 deaths in West Virginia due to influenza or pneumonia. 427 (93%) of these deaths occurred in adults of the age of 55 years and older (WV Vital Statistics; 2003)
- Influenza typically occurs during the winter months and has been responsible for an average of 36,000 deaths per year in the U.S - - most in adults aged 65 years and over. (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; Adult Immunization; overview; 2005)
- There are over 40,000 cases of invasive pneumococcal disease in the U. S. and approximately one-third of these cases occur in adults 65 and older. Over half of the more than 5,000 annual deaths from invasive pneumococcal disease occur in adults 65 years of age and older. (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; Adult Immunization; overview; 2005)

What are the costs associated with not getting flu or pneumonia immunizations?

- Over 225,000 excess hospitalizations occur each year due to influenza, with 63% occurring in adults 65 and over. (CDC; MMWR; July 29, 2005)
- Influenza vaccines can prevent illness in approximately 70% - 90% of healthy adults under the age of 65. (CDC; MMWR; July 29, 2005)
- Vaccination of healthy adults has resulted in decreased work absenteeism and decreased use of health care resources, including use of antibiotics. Reductions of up to 44% in health care provider visits, 45% in lost workdays; 28% in days working with reduced effectiveness and 25% in antibiotic use have been reported. (CDC; MMWR; July 29, 2005)

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