



NATIONAL INFLUENZA VACCINE SUMMIT NEWSLETTER

Influenza Activity Spotlights

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

Issue #13

Professional Medical Organizations

Please disseminate widely to all of your members.

1. In its electronic newsletter sent to the Federation of Medicine (all state and most specialty medical societies) on January 6, 2009, the American Medical Association (AMA) urged physicians to continue to immunize “patients who fall into both ‘high health’ and ‘no health risk’ categories,” throughout January, February and beyond. A similar communication also appeared on AMA morning rounds and the AMA’s electronic newsletter, *eVoice*, both of which go out to all members of the AMA. The communication also cited recent data from SDI presented at a recent Summit conference call indicating that physicians were not vaccinating past Thanksgiving. The AMA is committed to efforts to improve influenza immunization throughout the influenza season.
2. A recent episode of *30 Rock* features need for influenza vaccination! The episode was aired on January 15 and details the spread of influenza among “The Girlie Show” (TGS) cast and crew. NBC has posted both the [full “Flu Shot” episode](#) as well as a [2-minute clip](#).
3. A few recent media articles have reported that circulating influenza B viruses are different from the influenza B virus contained in this year’s seasonal influenza vaccine and this has reportedly resulted in questions being raised about the effectiveness of this season’s influenza vaccine. To clarify: Most influenza viruses studied so far in the United States are influenza A viruses, which are related to the two influenza A viruses in the vaccine. Very few B viruses have been seen so far this season in the United States, however, the majority of these are not related to the B virus in the vaccine. While many of the viruses studied in Canada have been influenza B viruses, circulating viruses can vary substantially by country, state and community. It’s not possible to predict which virus strains will be the most common in the United States at this time since it is still early in the season. The primary message from CDC at this point is that influenza season is just beginning, and vaccination now can still offer protection against influenza this season. Refer to [CDC’s background document](#) for additional information to support communications with patients on the importance and ongoing benefit of influenza vaccination this season. The Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy at the University of Minnesota has also issued [information on this issue](#).
4. The Battle Creek Health System (MCHS) in Michigan has implemented a mandatory influenza vaccination policy for all of its employees, physicians and volunteers. Those who don’t accept vaccination will be required to wear a mask during the influenza season, similar to the policy at [Virginia Mason Medical Center](#) in Seattle. An opinion piece written by an infectious disease physician at BCHS was recently published in *Battle Creek Enquirer*. Responses to this opinion piece, some critical of the Battle Creek policy, have been [posted](#). Anyone wishing to comment on the policy can post a blog on the *Enquirer’s* website.
5. New Jersey’s mandatory influenza immunization policy for children enrolled in day care and pre-school settings is getting some [coverage in the media](#).

6. For those of you who remember a recent Summit call detailing the Google [FluTrends project](#), you can find another article on it [here](#).
7. On December 19, 2008, CDC issued [interim guidance](#) for healthcare professionals on the use of influenza antiviral medications this influenza season. The guidance was issued in response to early data from a limited number of states indicating that a high proportion of influenza A (H1N1) viruses are resistant to the influenza antiviral medication oseltamivir (Tamiflu®). Worldwide, the proportion of H1N1 viruses that are resistant to oseltamivir has been increasing so this development is not surprising. The information is also available on a [podcast](#) and on the [CDC's website](#). CDC has developed [talking points](#) for Summit partners.
8. *AMNews* recently published an [article](#) on the issue of influenza vaccination efficacy among the elderly.
9. The National Influenza Vaccine Summit's Annual Meeting will be held May 19 and 20, 2009, in Dallas, Texas. Attendees should plan on arriving on the evening of the 18th. Please save these dates on your calendar.
10. While we all tend to focus on prevention of seasonal influenza, H5N1 is [still infecting humans in Asia](#), reminding us that we need to keep an eye on pandemic influenza as well. And, it's [still popping up in birds](#).
11. Please visit the [Summit's website](#) for more resources on influenza immunization.