

Template Talking Points for Managers  
2008-09 Flu Season  
TO THE MANAGER

Unvaccinated health care personnel (HCP) are a key vehicle for the transmission of influenza in health care settings. You and your staff have close, frequent contact with high-risk patients. Research has shown that many HCP continue to work while experiencing pre-clinical, asymptomatic, or even symptomatic influenza infections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all HCP get a yearly flu vaccine. Despite these recommendations, data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) shows that three out of five HCP put themselves, their families, and their patients at risk by not being vaccinated.<sup>2</sup>

Reducing influenza transmission from HCP to patients has become a top priority in Michigan. To support this effort nationally, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has developed an accreditation requirement for influenza vaccination to be offered to all staff and licensed independent practitioners effective January 1, 2007.<sup>3</sup>

Annual influenza vaccination has been proven to reduce the transmission of influenza, influenza-related complications, and death. Become a Flu Fighter. Protect yourself, your colleagues, and your patients.

How can you become a Flu Fighter? Emphasize your support of this program with your staff. The flu facts (below) and suggested responses that follow can make the process easy for you.

**Flu Facts**

- Each year, influenza kills about 36,000 people in the United States.<sup>1, 15, 25</sup>
- Over 200,000 people are hospitalized annually due to complications from the flu.<sup>1, 15, 25</sup>
- About 50% of people infected by the influenza virus do not feel ill or experience the classic clinical symptoms of influenza, therefore spreading the virus to people at risk of complications and death from the flu – infants, the elderly and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems.<sup>1, 15</sup>
- Unvaccinated HCP are a key cause of influenza outbreaks in health care settings.<sup>1, 15, 25</sup>
- Only 42% percent of U.S. HCP are vaccinated against influenza (CDC, unpublished data, 2006)<sup>1</sup>
- Vaccination of HCP has been associated with reduced work absenteeism and fewer deaths among nursing home and elderly hospitalized patients.<sup>1</sup>

## How Does the Flu Impact Health Care Facilities?

- Sixty-five residents of a long-term care facility in New York developed influenza. Over half developed pneumonia, 19 were hospitalized and one died.<sup>19</sup>
- In a flu outbreak in an internal medicine ward in 1999, 23% of staff became ill, resulting in:<sup>20</sup>
  - 14 days of staff sick leave
  - Cancellation of eight scheduled admissions
  - Suspension of emergency admissions for 11 days
  - Average additional cost per patient of \$3,798
  - Total cost of \$34,179
- When regular staff become ill, double-shift or pool workers are hired. Hiring replacement workers often means assuming additional costs beyond those associated with salary.
  - Studies show that using pool staff in place of experienced unit staff increases the incidence of medical errors.<sup>21</sup>
- During a flu outbreak in Genesee County, Michigan in 1982, unvaccinated nursing home residents were four times more likely to die than were vaccinated residents.<sup>15</sup>

## CDC Recommends Vaccination for the Following People:<sup>1, 15, 25</sup>

- People at high risk for complications from the flu, including:
  - Children aged 6 months through 18 years of age
  - Pregnant women
  - People 50 years of age and older
  - People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
  - People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
  - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu (see above)
  - Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)
  - **Health care personnel (HCP)**
- Anyone who wants to decrease their risk of getting influenza

*This document was adapted from the California Adult Immunization Coalition.*