Flu Vaccination Increases Among US Health Care Personnel

The percentage of US health care personnel being vaccinated against influenza has increased over the past 2 flu seasons.

A recent report in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* indicated that 72% of health care personnel, including physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and some nonclinical personnel, were vaccinated during the 2012-2013 season. In comparison, 63.5% were immunized in 2010-2011 and 66.9% received the vaccine in 2011-2012.

Researchers reported increased vaccinations among health care personnel in all settings except long-term care facilities, where the immunization rate was 64.4% during the 2010-2011 flu season, 52% in 2011-2012, and 58.9% in 2012-2013. Physicians had the highest vaccination rate, 92.3%, followed by pharmacists, 89.1%; nurse practitioners/physician assistants, 88.5%; nurses, 84.8%; other clinical personnel, 68.6%; and nonclinical personnel, 64.8%.

Coverage was 96.5% in health care settings that required personnel to be vaccinated. In contrast, 76.9% of health care personnel who worked in settings where immunization was encouraged but not required had been vaccinated. In health care settings where flu vaccine was offered at no cost for more than 1 day, the immunization rate was 86.2% compared with 75.7% in facilities that gave free vaccinations for only 1 day and 55.3% in settings where no-cost vaccine was not offered.

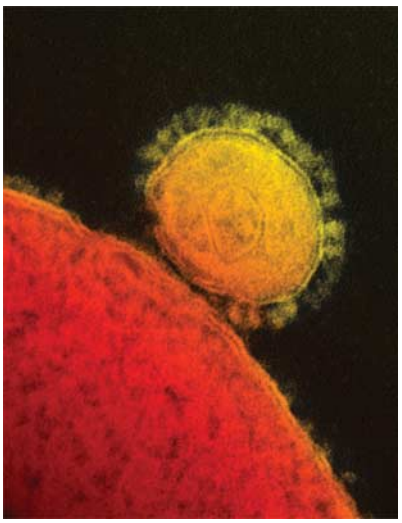
The data demonstrate that health care facilities need to mount organized efforts to ensure high flu vaccination rates among their personnel each season. Despite higher immunization rates in settings where vaccination was required, encouraged, or offered at no cost, the study showed that about one-third of health care facilities had no such policy in place.

Adopting strategies to promote vaccination among health care personnel in long-term care facilities is particularly important, the study noted, because flu vaccine usually is least effective in the elderly. Also, research has shown that vaccinating workers in long-term care facilities may reduce patients' risk of death (http://1.usa.gov/1fW8MbH).

Middle East Coronavirus Infections Surpass 100; Fatality Rate Is 45%

Recent data from the World Health Organization show that as of September 30, Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) had infected 130 people in 8 countries, resulting in 58 deaths.

Since the first case was reported in September 2012, all infections have been linked with traveling or living in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates.



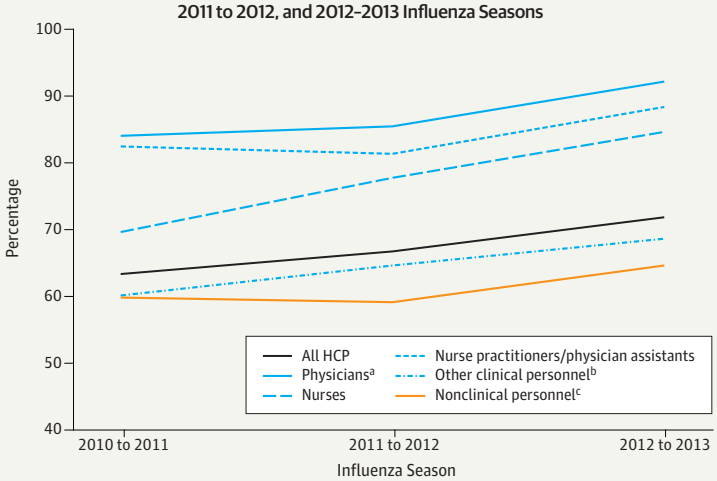
The median age of those with confirmed infection is 50 years and the male-female ratio among cases is 1.6 to 1. Most reported cases have involved severe respiratory illness requiring hospitalization, but in 21% of the infections, patients have had mild or no symptoms. The number of contacts infected by people with confirmed infections appears to be limited.

The largest, most complete clinical case series published to date included 47 patients. Among them, 98% had fever, 83% had cough, 72% had shortness of breath, 26% had diarrhea, and 21% had vomiting. Most had at least 1 chronic medical condition: 68% had diabetes, 34% had hypertension, 28% had heart disease, and 49% had kidney disease. Nearly three-fourths of patients in the case series had more than 1 chronic condition.

No cases have been reported in the United States, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises US health care professionals to evaluate patients for MERS-CoV infection is they develop fever and pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome within 14 days after traveling from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula (http://1.usa.gov/1860cBC).

News From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Section Editor: Rebecca Voelker, MSJ.

Percentage of Health Care Personnel (HCP) Who Received Influenza Vaccination, by Occupation Type, Internet Panel Survey: United States, 2010 to 2011, 2011 to 2012, and 2012–2013 Influenza Seasons



[a] Included dentists in 2010 to 2011 season.

[b] All seasons include pharmacists, allied health professionals, technicians, technologists, assistants, or aides. Dentists were added starting from the 2011 to 2012 season.

[c] Administrative support staff or manager and nonclinical support staff (eg, food service workers, housekeeping staff, maintenance staff, janitors, and laundry workers).

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2013;62(38).

Top, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases