

## Making the Case for Mandatory Health Care Worker Influenza Immunization

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SANFORD  
HEALTH

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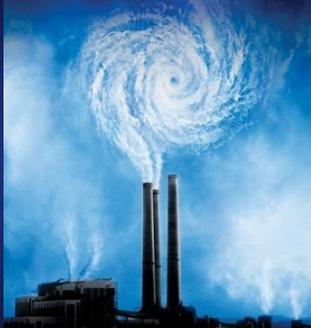
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### an inconvenient truth

A GLOBAL WARNING



"It doesn't matter whether you're a Republican or Democrat,  
liberal or conservative... your mind will be challenged in a nanosecond."  
- Roger Friedman, FOXNEWS.com

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## 7 Inconvenient Truths About Influenza Immunization



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**Truth #1:**  
**The General Population Does Poorly at Getting Immunized, and We HCW's Aren't Much Better**

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- Why Don't We Get Immunized?**
- |                                                                                        |                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) Inconvenient                                                                        | 6) Fear of side effects (e.g. Guillan-Barre)                               |
| 2) Don't believe it works                                                              | 7) "Had the vaccine last year, don't need it again"                        |
| 3) "I don't get sick"                                                                  | 8) "I'd rather take my chances with the flu, which usually isn't that bad" |
| 4) "I got the vaccine once, and it gave me the flu"                                    | 9) Needle phobic                                                           |
| 5) "Jenny McCarthy says it gives kids autism"<br>- Concerns about thimerosal (mercury) |                                                                            |

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- CDC Recommendations**
- 1981 CDC recommends all HCW's receive annual influenza immunization
  - Clinics and Hospitals since then have put out massive efforts to educate and encourage HCW immunization
    - Influenza blitzes, "Drive-By Shootings", Education etc.

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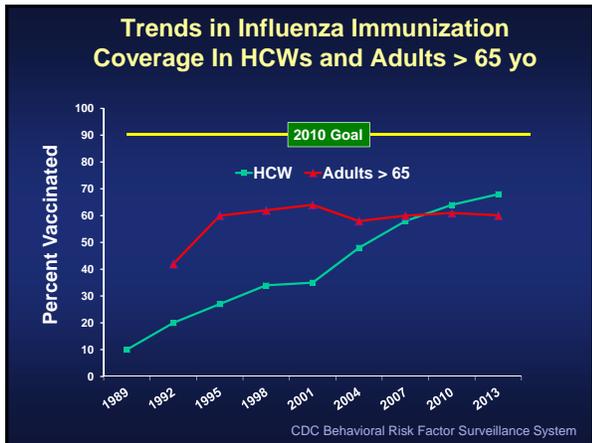
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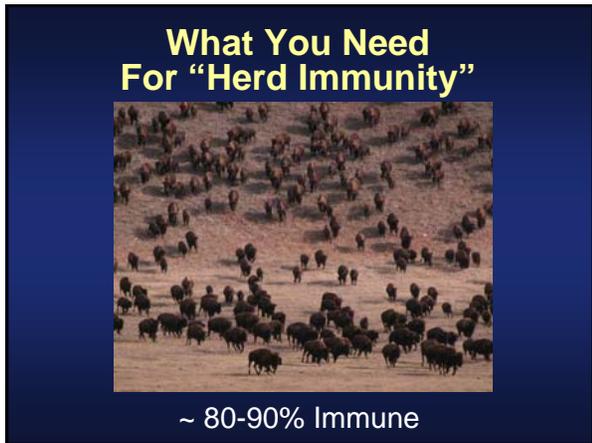
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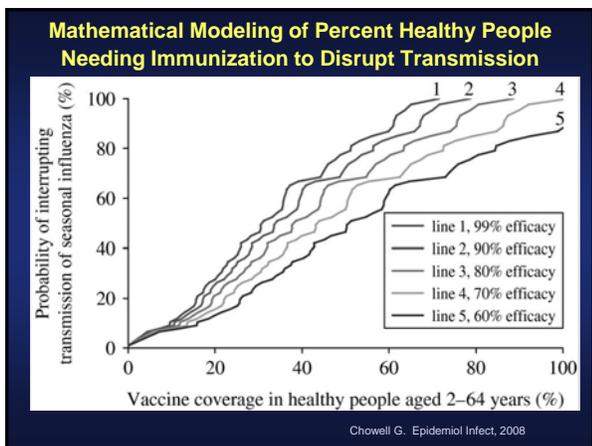
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## Truth #2: Influenza is a Killer Virus

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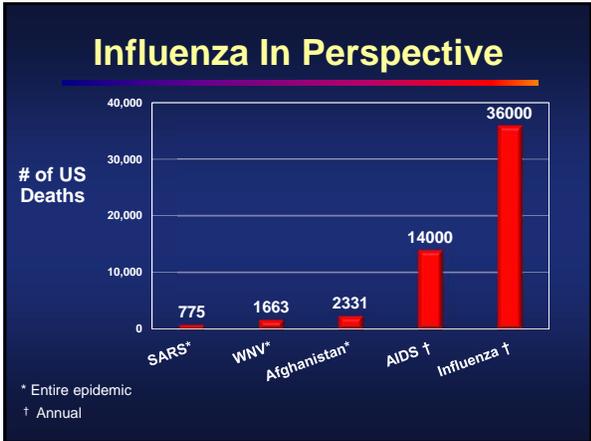
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- ### Influenza Mortality
- Annual mortality ~ same as breast cancer
  - Related to 1/20 deaths among Americans older than 65
  - 1/10,000 Americans will die this winter from influenza
  - Estimated direct costs to health care system annually in U.S. - \$3-5 billion
  - Disproportionately affects elderly, very young, and those with chronic diseases (exactly those people we hang out with all day)

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## Case of Pregnant Mother in ICU

- 23 yr old mother of 1, 38<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy
- Admitted to Sanford, Oct. 2009 with rapidly progressive severe pneumonia
- Only test positive was for H1N1 influenza
- Intubated and developed severe ARDS
- Near maximal ventilatory and vasopressor support
- Baby taken early by C-section in hopes of saving mother's life
- On ventilator ~ 10 days

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**Why do we immunize against influenza?**



Barry, a veteran fire-fighter, died at age 44 yrs from influenza

Breanne, died at age 15 mos from influenza complications

Lucio, died at age 8 yrs from influenza complications

Alana, died at age 5½ yrs from influenza

Amanda, died at age 4½ yrs from influenza

Courtesy of Families Fighting Flu

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## Truth #3:

HCW's Frequently Get Influenza and Spread it to Their Patients

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## Influenza in HCW's

- Cross sectional study of housestaff
- 37% reported ILI during an 8 month period
- 9% had more than 1 illness
- Illness duration averaged 7 days
- Missed work averaged 0.7 days
- ILI was common in healthy resident physicians, and most continued to work most of the days of their sx's

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## HCW Compliance in a NICU

- U.S. NICU study found staff immunization rates of 15-20%
- 76% of employees who reported flu-like symptoms during study period continued to care for patients

Eisenfeld L. Am J Infect Control 1994

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## HCW's and Influenza

- Numerous reports in medical literature of outbreaks of influenza in hospital settings presumed due to spread from HCW's
  - Examples
    - McMaster Univ NICU outbreak
    - Memorial Sloan-Kettering BM Tx Unit
    - Pediatric ward outbreak 2009

Eurosurveillance, Volume 15, Issue 1, 07 January 2010  
Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol. 2000 Nov;21(11):730-2  
Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol. 2000 Jul;21(7):449-54

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## Risk of Nosocomial Influenza in Lyon France 2004-2007

- Daily observation for ILI in 36 short stay units of 1100 bed Univ Hospital
- 64 cases of HA-ILI during observation period
- Assessed risk per exposure to others with ILI
- Relative Risk
  - Exposure to another patient - 4.8
  - Exposure to a HCW - 12.3

Vanhems. ICAAC 2009

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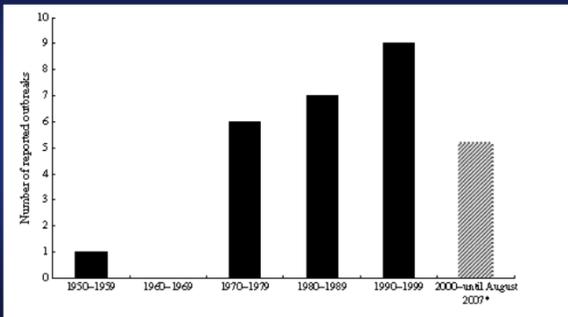
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## Number of Nosocomial Influenza Outbreaks Reported by Decade



Journal of Hospital Infection (2009) 71, 1–14

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## Influenza in HCW's

- Serosurvey of HCW's in Baltimore Hospital system
- After mild season, 23% of workers showed laboratory evidence of having had infection
  - 59% could not recall any influenza like illness
  - 28% could not recall any respiratory illness
- Asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic infection is common!

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## Asymptomatic Infection with Influenza

- German study of 122 patients with newly diagnosed influenza
- Followed them and all household contacts daily with RT-PCR and viral cultures, minimum 8 days

### FINDINGS:

- 21% of adults acquired infection by culture or PCR, and **never developed symptoms**
- 30% of secondary cases had **high viral loads on the day prior** to the first day of symptoms

Suess T. PLoS ONE 2012.

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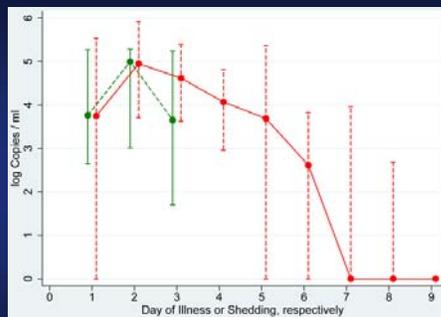
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Median Influenza Viral Load in 6 Asymptomatic Household Contacts



Suess T, Rentschmidt C, Schink SB, Schwelger B, et al. (2012) Comparison of Shedding Characteristics of Seasonal Influenza Virus (Sub)Types and Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, Germany, 2007–2011. PLoS ONE 7(12): e51653. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0051653  
<http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0051653>



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## Truth #4:

HCW Influenza Immunization  
Protects Both Worker and Patient

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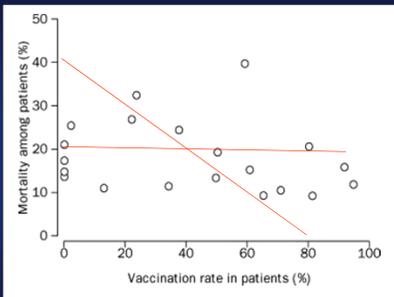
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## Scottish Nursing Home Study



Carman WF. Lancet 2000.

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## What Effect Does Immunizing HCWs Have on Patient Outcomes?

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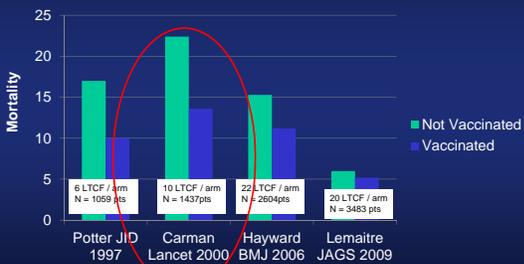
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## Impact of HCW Vaccination on Patient Mortality




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## Influenza Vaccine and Guillain-Barre' Syndrome

- Background is 1-2 / 100,000 people / yr develop GBS
- 1976 Swine Flu vaccine – 2-3/100,000
- Since then, numerous studies show no association
  - 2 studies identified ~1 additional GBS case per million vaccinees
  - By contrast, 750 per million adults are hospitalized with seasonal influenza per year
  - Of note: Patients with prior non-vaccine associated GBS have a higher risk of recurrence from influenza than from the vaccine

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## What About Thimerosal?

- Mercury preservative put in the multi-dose vaccine vials
- No vaccines for children under 6 contain thimerosal
- Amounts of mercury in thimerosal containing vaccines fall well below all accepted standards for mercury exposure
- Long track record of safety and efficacy
- Several recent well designed, large studies have shown no association with autism, ADD, or neurodevelopmental diseases and thimerosal
- Study of 2000 pregnant women demonstrated no adverse fetal effects associated with influenza vaccine

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## Amount of Mercury in Thimerosal Preservative

- One oz of swordfish - 28 mcg
- One oz of red snapper - 17 mcg
- One can of Tuna - 29 mcg
  
- One dose of influenza vaccine - < 1 mcg

Methyl-Mercury vs Ethyl-Mercury

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Truth #6:

Mandatory immunization for HCW's is now recommended by the IDSA, ACP, SHEA, National Patient Safety Foundation, Dept. of Defense, AAP, National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, and is being considered by some state legislatures

- Dozens of major health care systems and 100's of hospitals have now adopted this policy (e.g. Virginia Mason, BJC, HCA, and locally... Altru, Medcenter 1, Sanford Health)

<http://www.immunize.org/honor-roll/>

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**Consumer Organizations Now Scrutinizing HC Systems on Their Performance**



September 2, 2010

Report Finds That Only Half of California Hospital Workers Got Flu Vaccine  
Consumers Union Releases Analysis Based on Data Obtained From the Department of Public Health Through Public Records Act Request

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Truth #7:

**Mandating HCW Immunization Works**

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## Efficacy of Mandates

- Virginia Mason in Seattle went from 56% to 96% immunization rate after mandate in 2005
- BJC HealthCare in St. Louis achieved 98.4% immunization of 26,000 employees in 2008
  - 1.3% medical exemption
  - 0.3% had religious exemption

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## The Sanford Experience - Issues

- All workers or just those with direct patient exposure?
- How to implement medical exemptions?
- How to implement religious exemptions?
- Is a philosophical objection the same thing as a religious exemption?
- What to do with HCWs who meet an exemption or refuse without an accepted exemption?

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## Why Not Mandate?

- Contrary to personal autonomy
- Coercion could affect morale
- Vaccine is not without personal risk
- Legal question of authority to mandate

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## Legality of Mandates

- Longstanding precedent for government mandates
  - Jacobson v Massachusetts, 1905, smallpox
  - School entry mandates for immunization
- Employer precedent
  - Doctrine of “employment at will”
  - Exception is collective bargaining agreements

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## Personal Risk

- Risk from influenza vaccine is very small
- HCW's assume certain degree of risk in the care of patients
  - exposure to contagious diseases
    - needlestick injuries and exposure to blood-borne pathogens
    - airborne pathogens like TB, Varicella, Pertussis
  - radiation exposure

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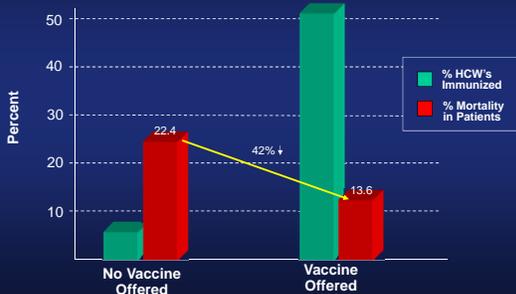
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## HCW Immunization Rates and Patient Mortality in Scottish NH's



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## Why Don't We Get Immunized?

- 1) Inconvenient
- 2) Don't believe it works
- 3) "I don't get sick"
- 4) "I got the vaccine once, and it gave me the flu"
- 5) "Jenny McCarthy says it gives kids autism"  
- Concerns about thimerosal (mercury)
- 6) Fear of side effects (e.g. Guillain-Barre')
- 7) "Had the vaccine last year, don't need it again"
- 8) "I'd rather take my chances with the flu, which usually isn't that bad"
- 9) Needle phobic

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## "The Patient Comes First"



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The next time the pregnant woman who spent 2 weeks in our ICU and nearly lost her baby and her life, comes to our hospital or clinic for care, and asks if we have been immunized, which of those excuses for not getting immunized will sound reasonable to her?

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“The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others”

*John Stuart Mill  
British Philosopher*

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## Type your question in the chat window to the right

After the presentation, questions may be sent to:

Molly Howell	mahowell@nd.gov
Abbi Pierce	apierce@nd.gov
Amy Schwartz	amschwartz@nd.gov
Mary Woinarowicz	mary.woinarowicz@nd.gov
Miranda Baumgartner	mlbaumgartner@nd.gov
Rahel Gemmeda	rgemmeda@nd.gov

Immunization Program : 701.328.3386 or toll-free 800.472.2180

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## Post- Test

- Post-test
- Nurses interested in continuing education credit, visit <http://www.ndhealth.gov/disease/post/default.aspx?PostID=62>
- Successfully complete the four-question posttest to receive your certificate
- Credit for this session available until Tuesday, November 11, 2014
- This presentation will be posted to our website: [www.ndhealth.gov/immunize](http://www.ndhealth.gov/immunize)

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