

Influenza Vaccine-related Messaging: Public Perspective and Considerations

Glen Nowak, Ph.D.

Chief, Media Relations
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Alan P. Janssen, MSPH

Health Communications Specialist
National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases

April 20, 2007



Overview

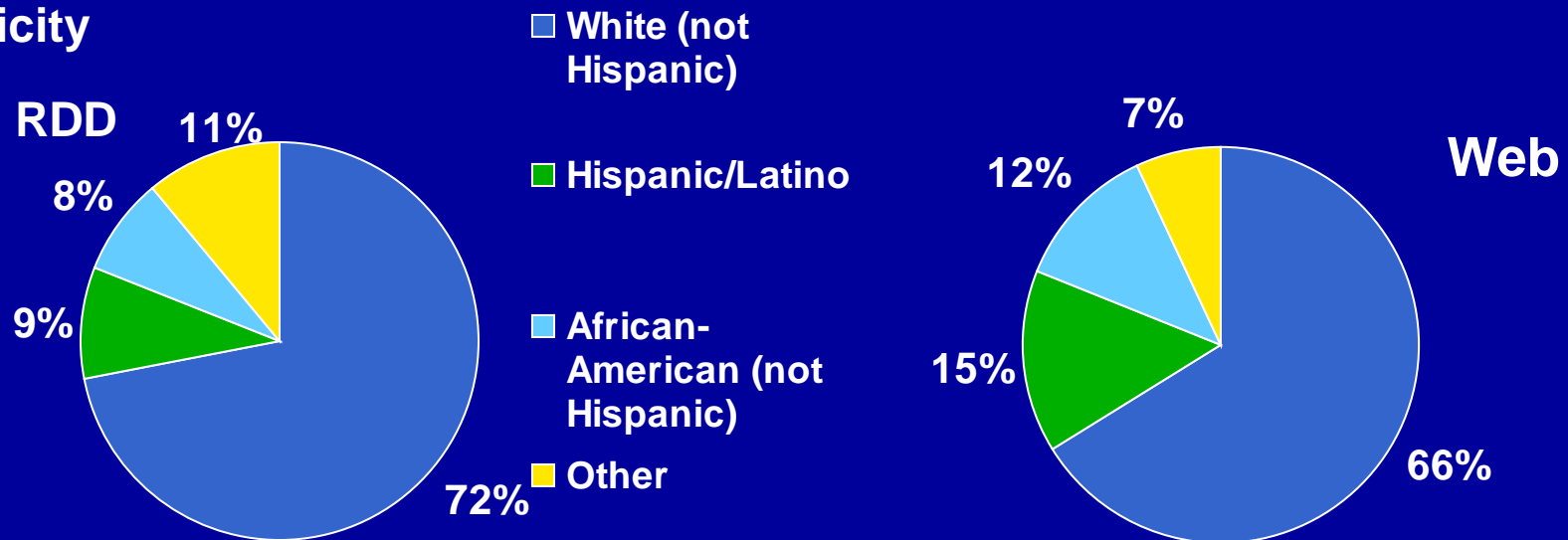
- Focus on three facets of communication
 - Consumers (i.e., people we want to get an influenza vaccination)
 - Media (primarily news media)
 - Messages
- Most findings come from two 2006-07 surveys
 - Random digit dialed survey of 1,247 people
 - Web panel survey of 1,290 people
 - Both nationally representative samples using close-ended questions

Characteristics of Sample

- **Gender**

- Of RDD respondents, 52% were female and 48% were male
- Of Web respondents, 51% were female and 49% were male

- **Ethnicity**



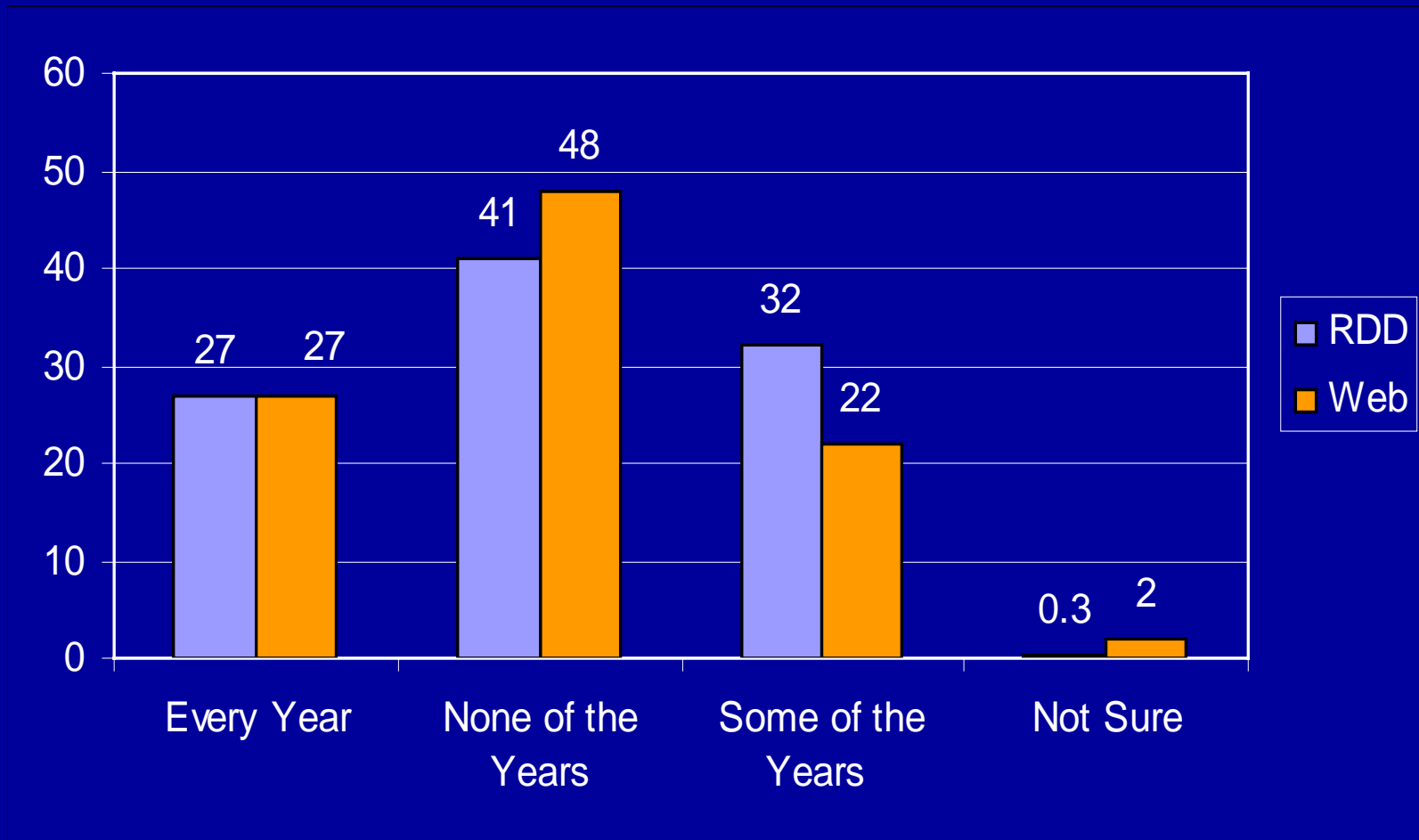
- **Age**

- Data were collected for four age brackets: 18–34, 35–54, 55–64, and 65+ years of age
- Majority of respondents in both modalities were aged 18–54 (71% RDD, 69% Web)

Getting the Flu Shot—Current Season

- 43% of RDD and 36% of web panel respondents reported having gotten a seasonal flu shot this season.
- Among web panel respondents, Whites (41%) were more likely than Hispanics (21%) to have gotten the flu shot. However, among RDD respondents, there were no significant differences between any ethnic groups.
- For both modalities, respondents over the age of 65 were more likely (69% RDD, 73% Web) than any other age group to have gotten the flu shot.

Percentage Getting the Flu Shot- Last 5 Years



Question 1 – “True” or “False”

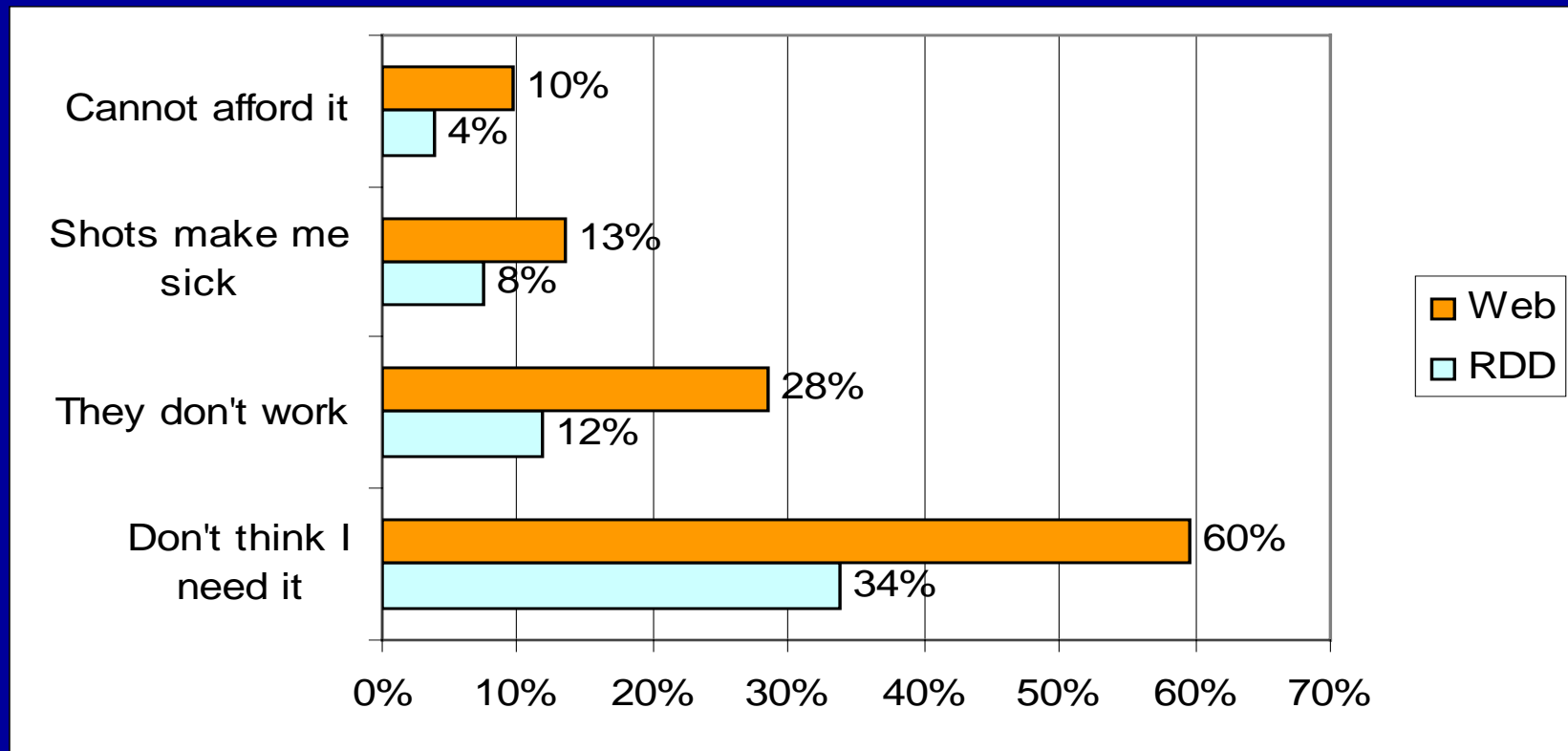
Most people believe they are very likely to get sick with influenza, with most people who believe this very likely to get an annual influenza vaccination.

Findings

- About a third of respondents believed it was very likely someone like themselves would get seasonal flu this year.
- Most people believed seasonal flu can lead to severe health consequences (76%).
- However, most respondents indicated no strong or significant concern about getting ill with seasonal flu (about 65% overall)
 - Females have greater concern than males
 - **Married individuals** have greater concern than single, with this being more pronounced in those 65 and older
 - Those with least concern were younger, single, and male.

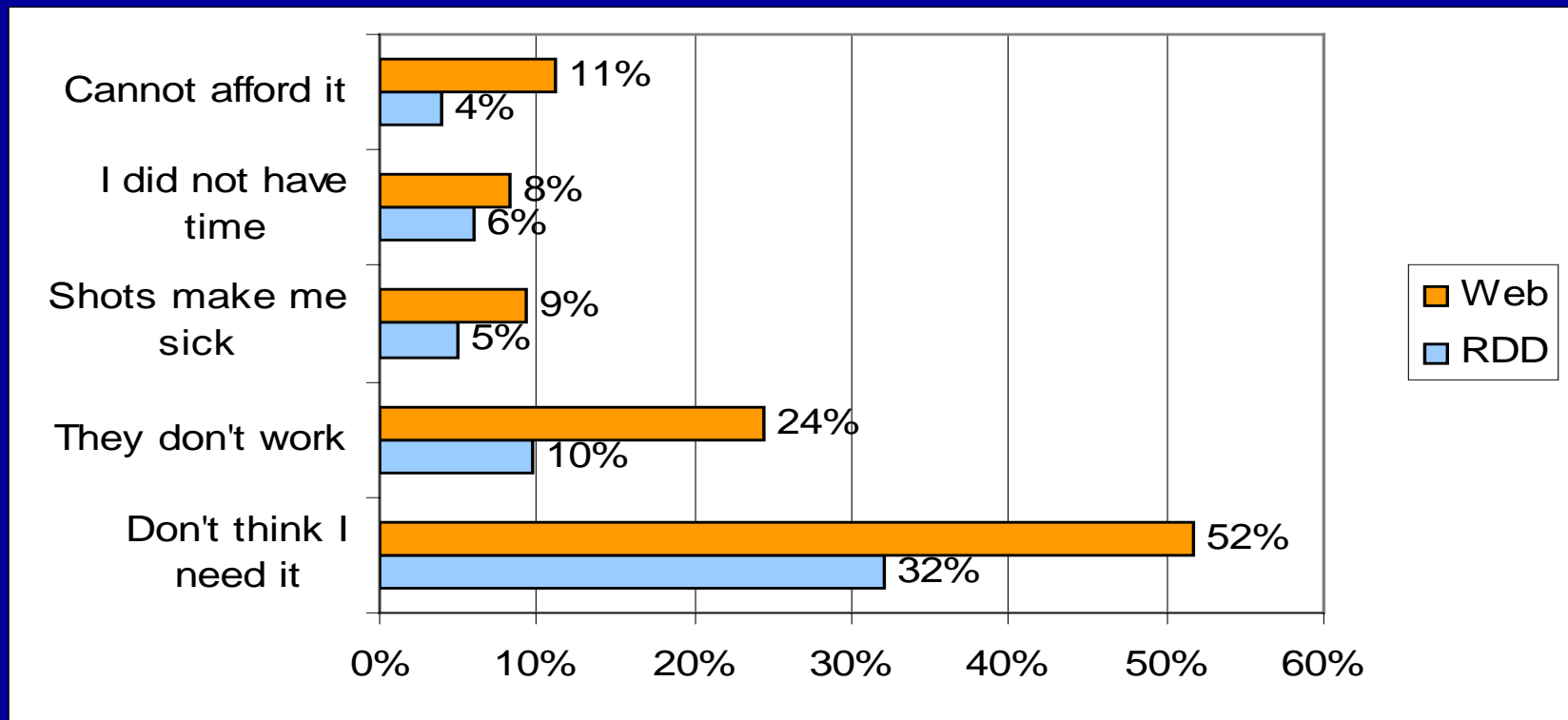
Reasons for Not Getting the Flu Shot—Current Season

- Most common reasons respondents are not planning to get a seasonal flu shot this season (check all that apply):



Reasons for Not Getting the Flu Shot—Last Year

- 56% of RDD respondents and 64% of Web respondents said they did not receive a shot last year



Question #2 – “True” or “False”

The majority of people discussed influenza vaccination with their physician or other health care professional this season.

- About a third said “yes”
- Just over half said “no”
- And about 15 percent said they did not see a physician or health care professional this flu season

Question 3 – “True” or “False”

The American public/consumers are, or would be, interested in learning more about influenza vaccine manufacturing processes and the complexities of influenza vaccine distribution.

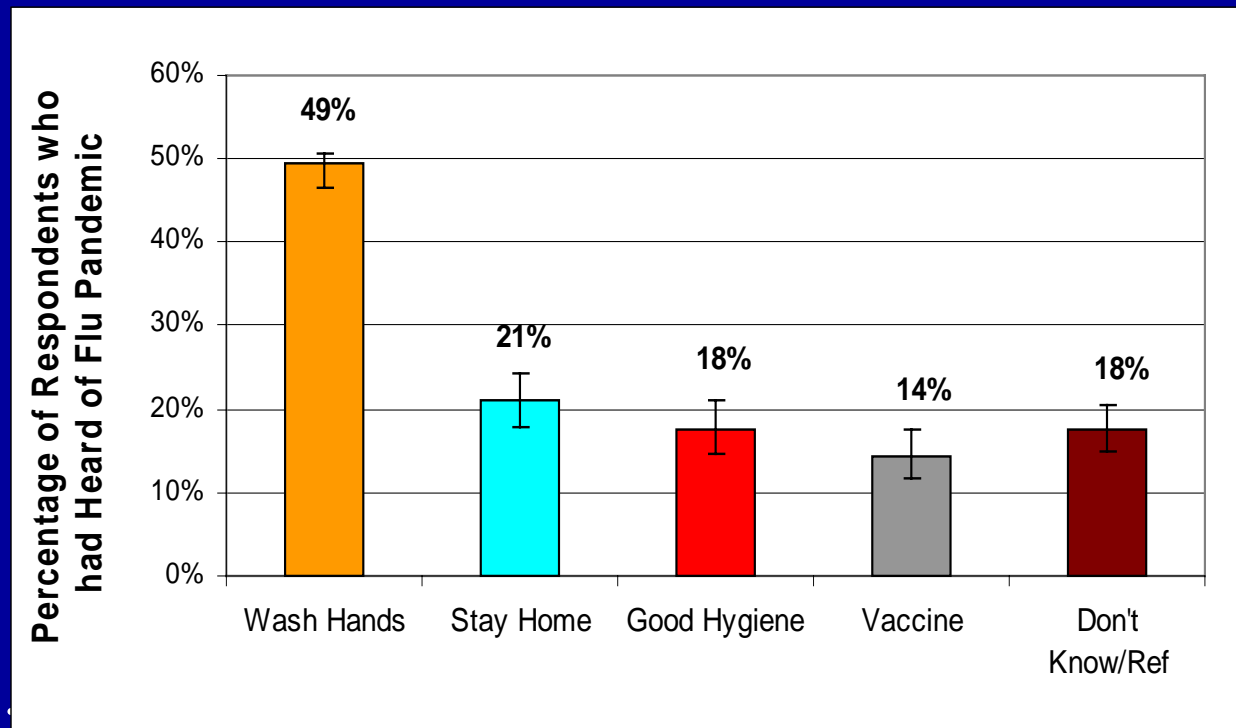
Educating them about these would:

- 1) cause them to more strategically plan when to get their influenza vaccination; and
- 2) increase their willingness to come back to a health care provider two or three times for a flu vaccination.

Beliefs Regarding Preventive Measures

February 2007 Survey National Phone Survey (1203 adults)

When asked to list some things that they could do personally to help prevent the spread of a flu pandemic, respondents indicated the following four measures most frequently: washing hands, staying at home, maintaining good hygiene, and getting vaccinated. A substantial number of respondents indicated they *do not know* (18%).

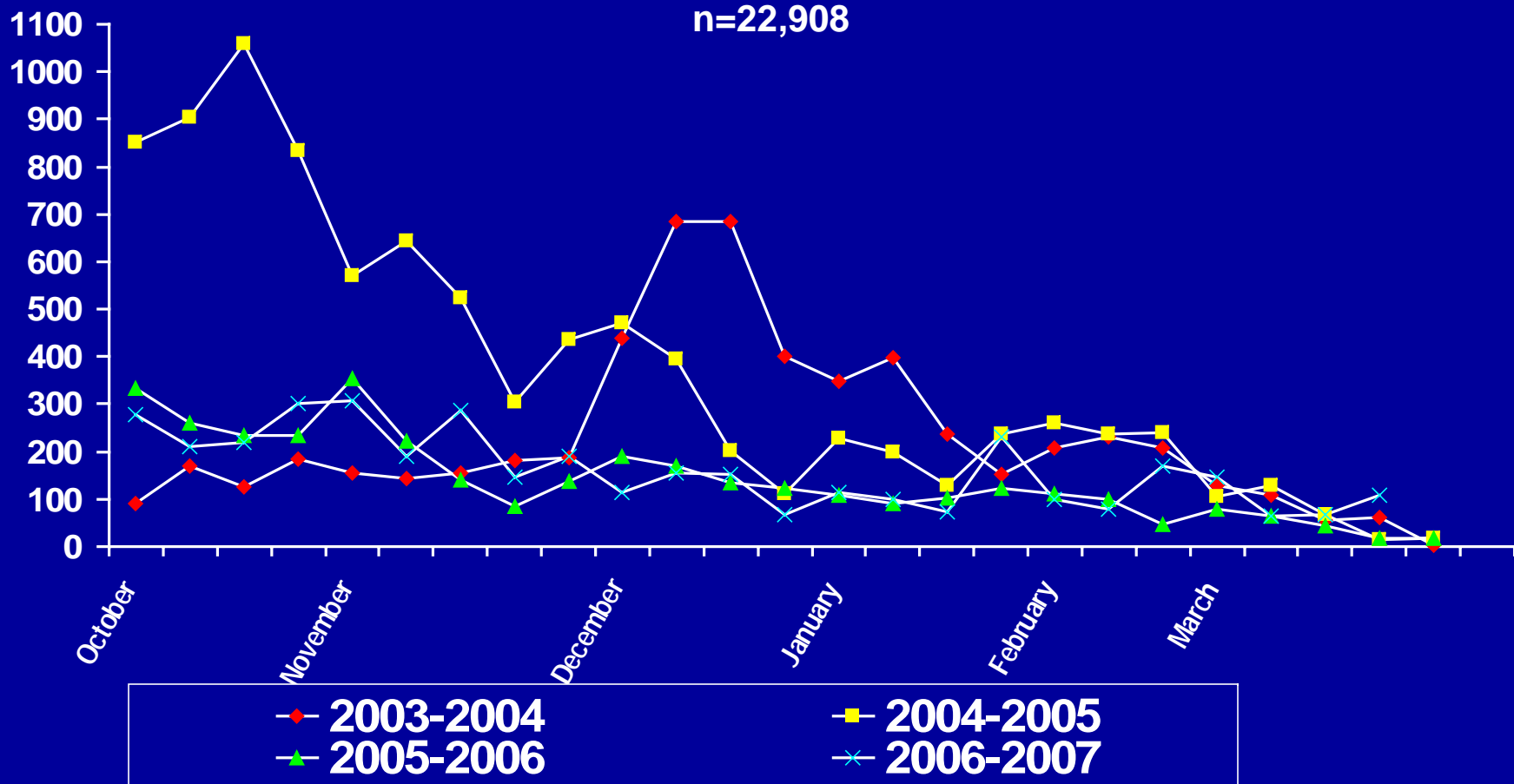


Question 4 – “True” or “False”

“Good news” about influenza vaccine attracts more media interest and coverage than “bad news.”

[As assessed via a content analysis of about 23,000 media stories— primarily newspapers— for the time period October 1 to March 15, for each of the past four years.]

Seasonal Influenza News Stories by Month and Year 2003 to 2007

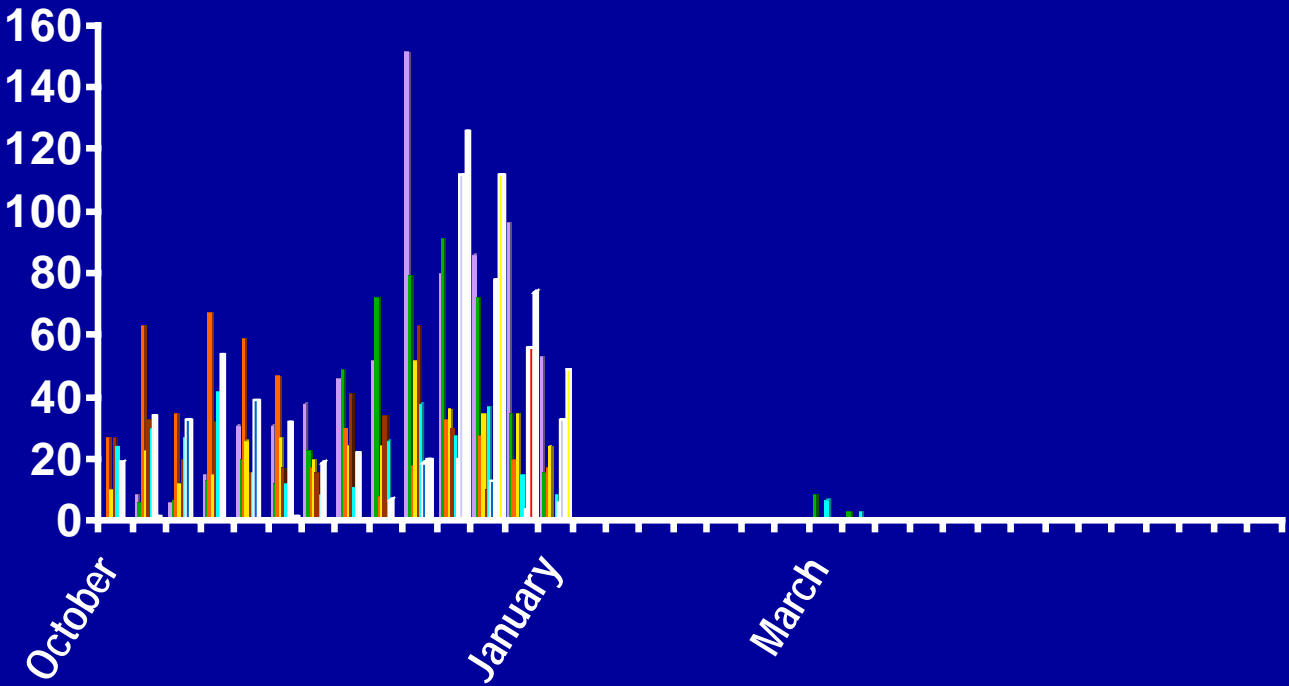


Newspaper, wire services, press releases, select internet sites

Question #5 – “True” or “False”

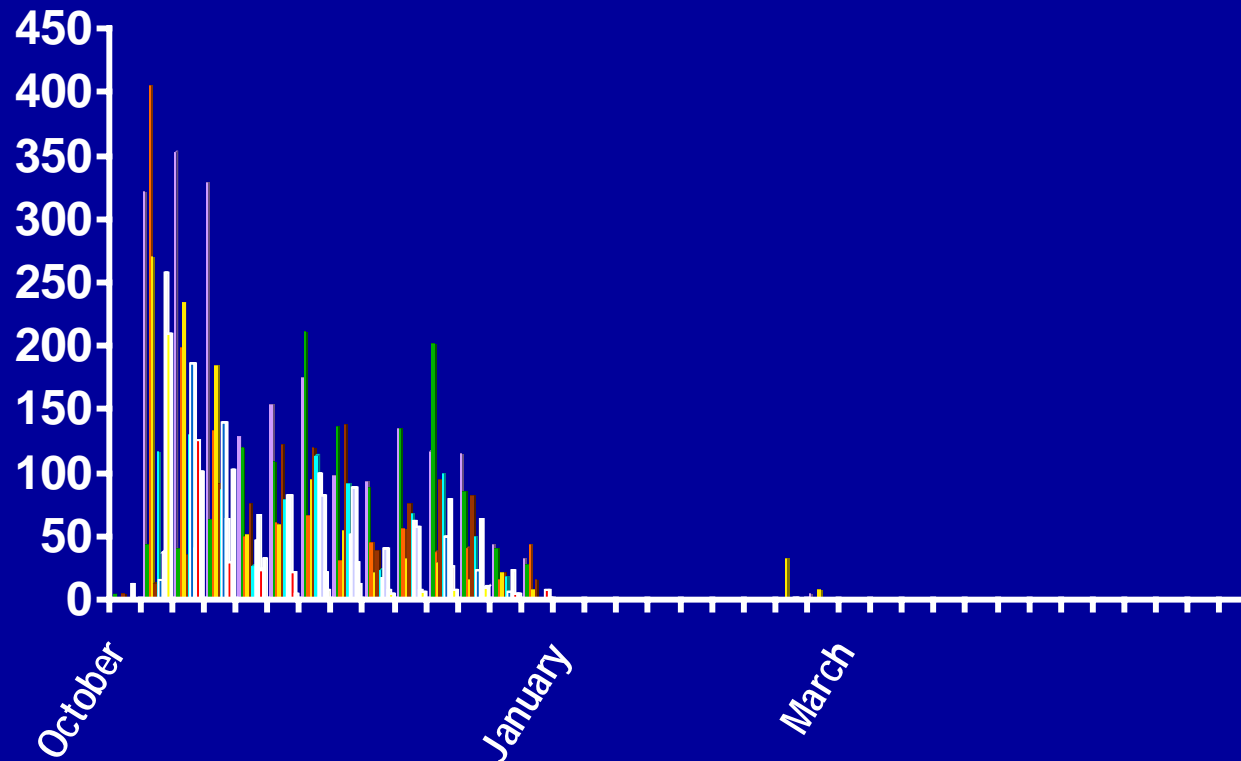
The news media: 1) rarely tell people to get an influenza vaccination, 2) fail to tell people in January and February to get a flu vaccination, and 3) need to address myths and misperceptions regarding flu vaccine.

Seasonal Influenza News Messages by Week for 2003 – 2004: Top Ten Messages



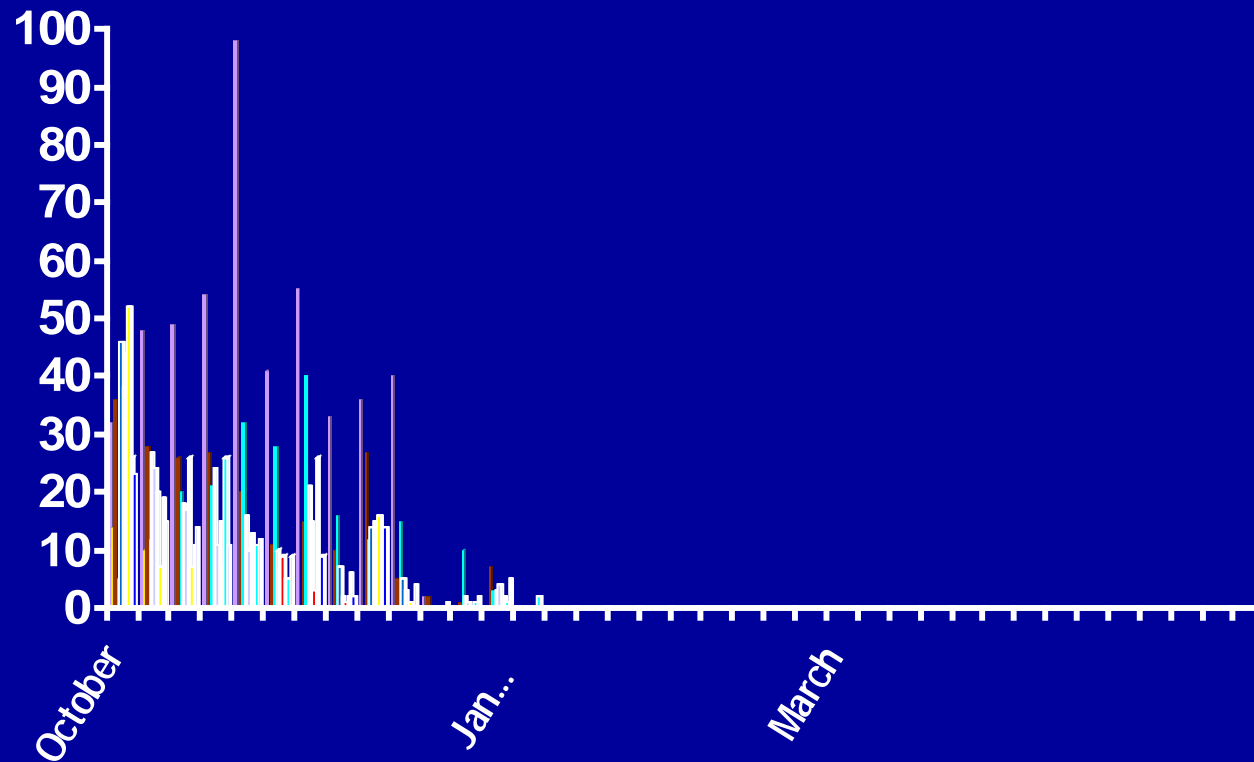
- Flu Outbreak Reported
- Flu Season Arrived Early
- Date, time, location of vaccination clinics
- Flu Information or symptoms
- Doctors Recommend Flu Shot
- Flu kills 36,000 per year
- Free Flu Vaccinations Offered/Given
- Flu Vaccine Shortage
- Increased Demand for Vaccine
- Child Death Reported

Seasonal Influenza News Messages by Week for 2004 – 2005: Top Ten Messages



- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ Flu Vaccine Shortage | ■ Amount of Vaccine Doses |
| ■ High Risk - First Priority | ■ Flu Vaccine Cut in Half |
| ■ Vaccine Clinic for High Risk | ■ Call Hotline/See Website for Info. |
| ■ Fed/State/Local limits to High Risk | ■ Date, time, location of Vaccination Clinic |
| ■ Flu Vaccine Manufacturer License Suspended | ■ Healthy People Forgo Vaccination |

Seasonal Influenza News Messages by Week for 2006 – 2007: Top Ten Messages

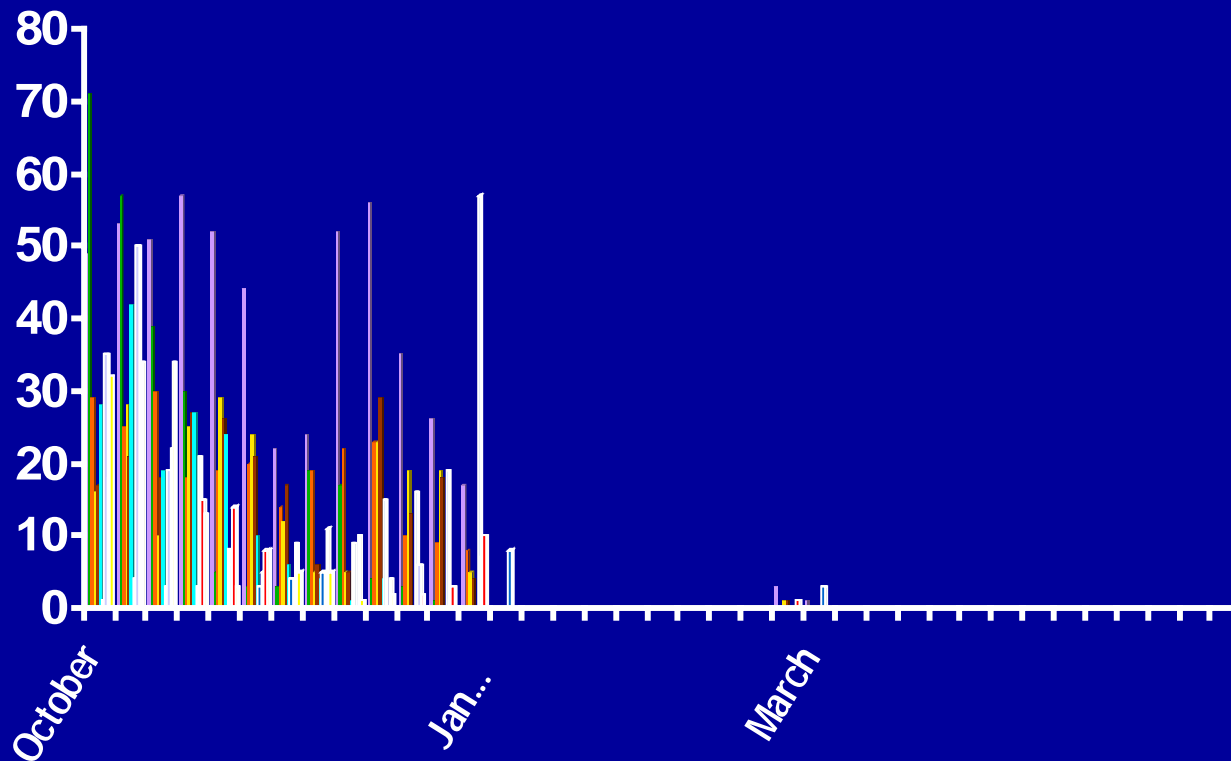


■ Date, time, location of Vaccination Clinic
 ■ Call for Appointment/Information
 ■ Enough Vaccine This Year
 ■ Flu Information/Symptoms

■ Flu Vaccine Arrived, Available
 ■ Flu Kills 36,000 Annually
 ■ Record Amount This Year

■ Amount of Vaccine Doses
 ■ Flu Causes 200,000 Hospitalizations
 ■ Vaccination Recommendations

Seasonal Influenza News Messages by Week for 2005 – 2006: Top Ten Messages



- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| ■ Date, time, location of Vaccination Clinic | ■ High Risk Group - First Priority | ■ Amount of Vaccine Doses |
| ■ Flu Vaccine Arrived, Available | ■ Call for Appointment/Information | ■ Enough Vaccine This Year |
| ■ Flu Outbreak Reported | ■ At Risk Over 50, 65+, Chronic Illness | ■ Call Flu Hotline/See Website |
| ■ Flu Shot Offered/Given to High Risk | | |

“5 Flu Myths Debunked”

- CNN and CNN.Com – March 22, 2007
- Five Myths addressed. . .
 - “You can catch a mild form of the flu from a flu shot.”
 - “Bed rest is really the only treatment for the flu.”
 - “You can only catch the flu in cold weather regions.”
 - “You must get the flu vaccine before December for it to be effective.”
 - “Flu is not a major health danger for healthy children over 5 years old.”

Question 6 – “True” or “False”

The strongest messages we could have regarding influenza vaccination are:

- “Everyone should get an annual vaccination.”
- “All children between 6 months and 18 years of age should receive an annual vaccination (unless medically contraindicated)
- “The more people who are vaccinated, the more people who are directly and indirectly protected from influenza.”

Question 7

The previous messages could be strengthened by:

- Specifying the groups of people that really benefit or benefit more from influenza vaccination
- Providing a detailed list of “priorities” as to who should receive vaccine when
- Stressing the need to use all or almost of the available vaccine supply to ensure the nation’s flu vaccine supplies stay high and continue to increase.
- Highlighting the health benefits of influenza vaccination, particularly for individuals and their families/loved ones as well as health care professionals.

“Flu Vaccine Could Prevent Heart Attacks”

- “A U.S. study has found a clear link between influenza outbreaks and deaths from heart disease. The risk of dying from a heart attack increased by a third during weeks when people were catching the flu, an investigation of more than 35,000 deaths found.”
- Findings were published this week in European Heart Journal, and reported by CBS News and London Times.
- Done by researchers at University of Texas in Houston.

“We know from our other research that one in three people with heart disease do not consider themselves at high risk for heart-related complications from influenza and therefore do not receive annual flu shots. Currently, people are not practicing as we preach, and doctors need to work to change this.”

Professor Mohammad Madjid
Lead investigator

Question 7 – “True” or “False”

There is a deep and broad willingness, commitment and ability to stand by a universal vaccination recommendation in the face of vaccine production or distribution delays, fewer doses being available than projected, and/or significant reductions in the amount of vaccine available.

e.g., “We are not going to prioritize,” “Everyone benefits from vaccination, and our recommendation remains that all people are eligible to receive it.”

Some Final Messaging Thoughts

- We seek to “prevent,” people seek to “avoid”
- We must be ever mindful that “Influenza viruses drift, influenza viruses shift, influenza viruses can cause ‘rifts’” (i.e., much that affects consumer interest and demand for vaccine is beyond our control)
 - When the virus arrives
 - The strains that cause illness
 - The match between vaccine strains and circulating viruses

Thank you