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Strategies to Overcome Myths and Misperceptions

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“I understand that the vaccine can be unsafe, especially for my baby”

2008 National Influenza Vaccine Summit

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Delivering Next Generation Care





*What Strategies Can Reduce Myths and Misperceptions?

- **Education, Education, Education**
- **Listen. What is the root of the misunderstanding? Fear? Knowledge deficit? Attitude? Experience? Emotions? Beliefs?**
- **Storytelling: Sharing real experiences with the dangers of influenza disease**
- **Modeling: Vaccinate Health care Professionals!**
- **“Balanced” media—is it even possible?**



What is Safe?

- **SAFE = No Harm from the vaccine? No vaccine is 100% safe**
 - **SAFE = No Harm from the disease? Influenza vaccine is certainly not 100% effective**
 - **Have we communicated realistic expectations?**
 - **Communicate that the safety and effectiveness of receiving influenza vaccine is far less risky than being un-immunized**
 - **To do nothing is to take a risk**
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The “T” word

- **Multi-dose vials of influenza vaccine contain thimerosal as a preservative**
- **This requires time for conversation in the clinics about thimerosal, even in mass vaccination settings**
- **Theoretical/unproven risk with thimerosal vs Real/Considerable risk with disease**
- **Education on the lack of scientific support for thimerosal as a causative agent of autism is as necessary as ever**
- **However, when statistics and double-blind studies don't matter to people, how do we get through to them? Address myths.....**



Flu Vaccine Unsafe for Pregnant Women?

- Women who will be pregnant during the flu season are in the high priority group for flu vaccine. It's unsafe not to vaccinate
- Vaccinate during any trimester if pregnant during flu season with inactivated vaccine
- Pregnant women hospitalized at greater rates during influenza epidemics
- Rate of hospitalization of pregnant women in the 3rd trimester compares to non-pregnant women with high risk medical conditions (Neuzil)
- Pregnant women do have some natural immune suppression during pregnancy making them more vulnerable to disease



★ Flu Vaccine Unsafe for Newborns? ★

- **There is no influenza vaccine licensed for infants under 6 months of age due to high incidence of febrile reactions in this age**
- **Influenza disease in the very young causes some of the highest morbidity and mortality—the U shaped epi curve**
- **It is critical people caring for young infants are immunized including:**
 - Family members and relatives
 - Child care providers
 - Health care providers including all clinic staff



* Flu Vaccine Unsafe for infants, toddlers and older children? *

- **ALL children 6 months of age to 18 years should get influenza vaccine**
- **The risk of the disease far outweighs the risk of the vaccine**
- **The goal is not only to prevent death, but also to reduce morbidity from significant interpandemic epidemics**
- **Options are available for healthy children 2 and over for intranasal vs. injectable**
- **Explain how the cold-adapted “live” vaccine works**
- **Side effect to TIV generally includes local reactions which are actually more common in adults**
- **Systemic reactions are uncommon (Nichol)**



* Infant's Immune System is Too Weak? *

- Even premature babies have the immune capacity to respond to inactivated vaccines
- When they are 60 days old, even in an NICU, babies are started on their series



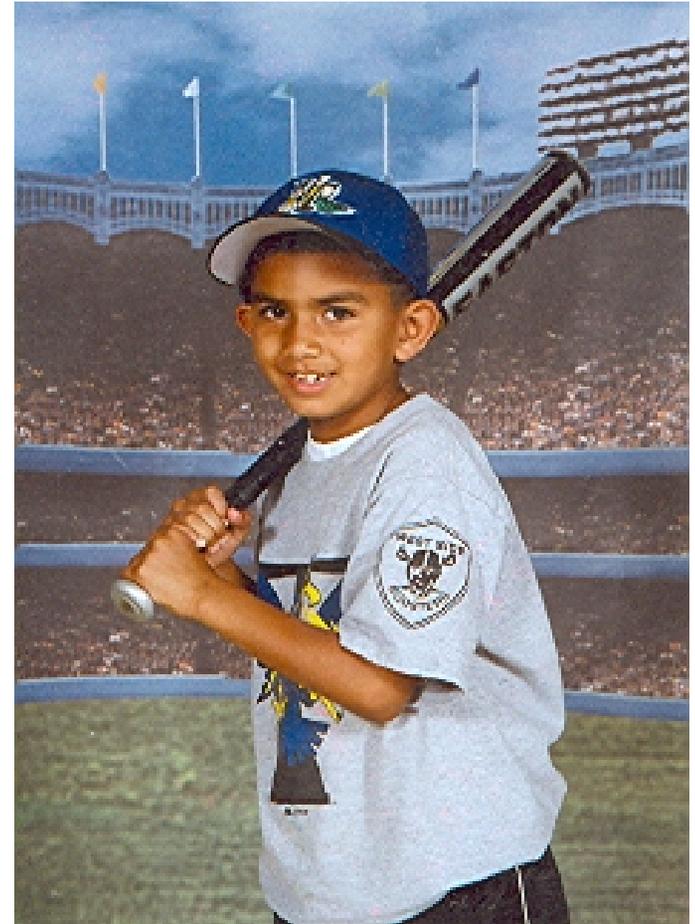
★ What's a Child's Risk of Disease? ★

- **Who are the kids who get influenza?**
 - They must be sick already
 - They must have problems with their immune system
 - They must be too young to be immunized
 - They must go to big schools with lots of exposures
 - They must live in the city in crowded conditions
 - They must have only gotten 1 vaccine



★
Wednesday, January 31, 2007
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- **Television news airs photos a family has shared of their 8 year old son “Lucio” who died of Influenza A.**
- **Their hope is to alert parents in order to prevent other children from dying.**
- **Telling the real stories makes a difference**





MN Pediatric Influenza Deaths, 2007

- **6 deaths in MN in 2007 from Influenza, 10% of the US peds cases**
- **6 Children died between 1/23/07 & 2/21/07**
- **Half lived in the metro, half in Greater MN**
- **All males, 3 were 8yrs; a 2yr, 18mo, 17 mo**
- **4 of the 6 were cared for at Children's**
- **Only 1 was vaccinated, none in the recommended age-group**
- **Half (3 of 6) were otherwise healthy**
- **2 of the 3 underlying conditions were MRSA**

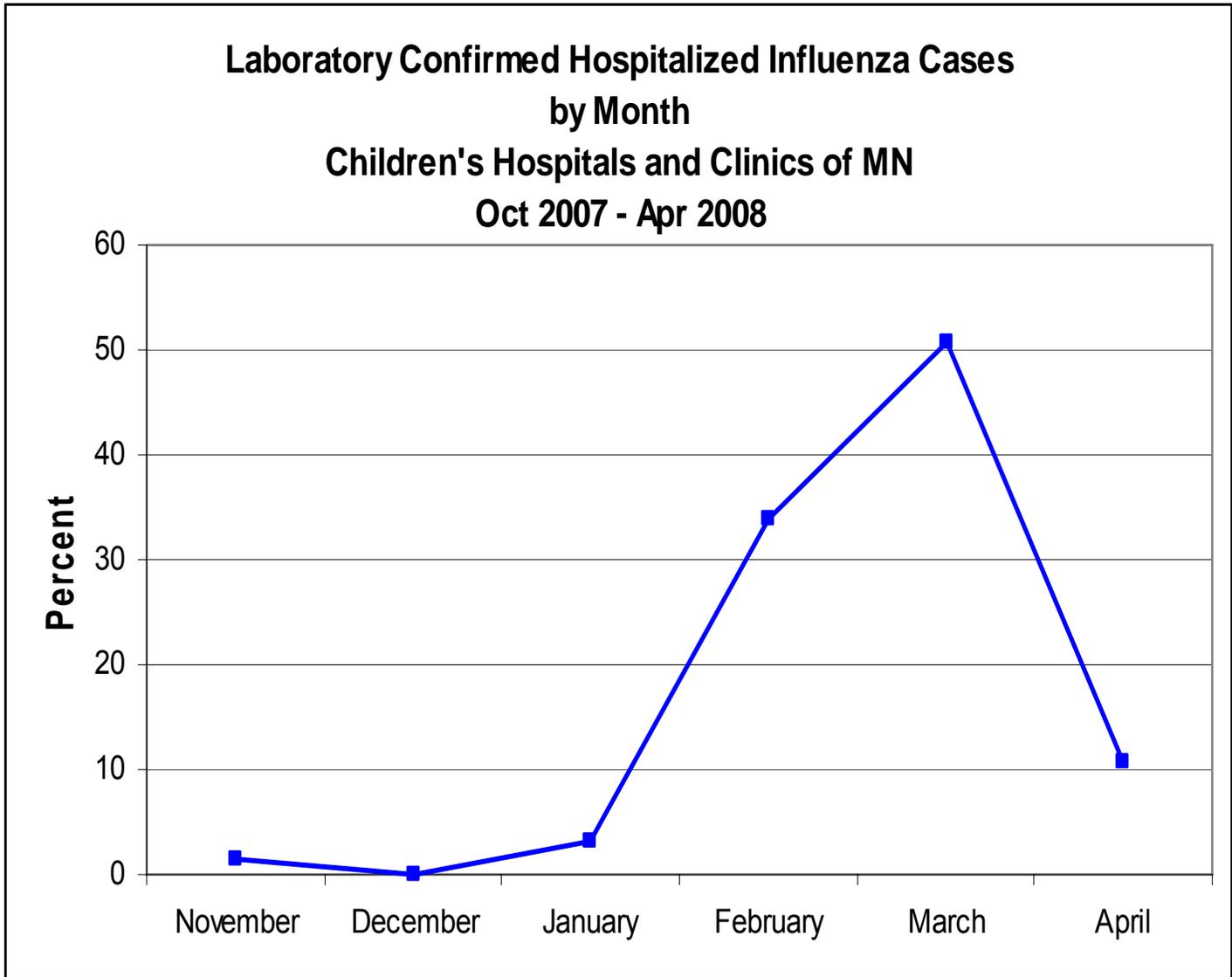




★ Children's Hospitals and Clinics of MN
Laboratory Confirmed Hospitalized Influenza Cases
Oct 2007 – Apr 2008

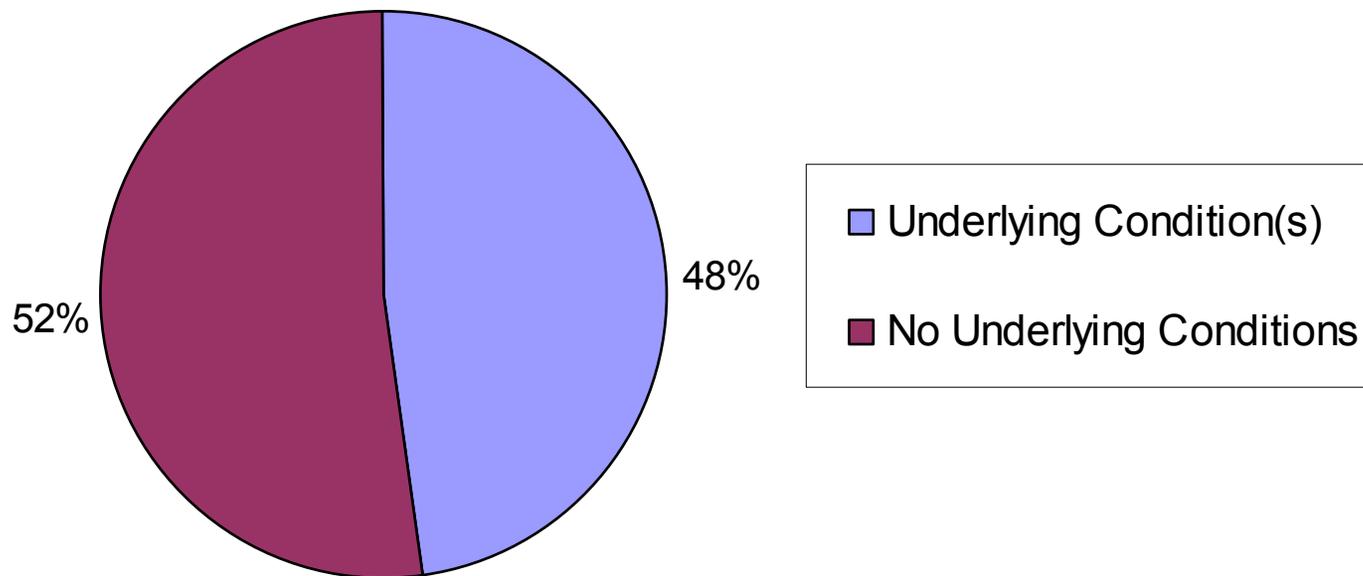
- **N = 65**
- **Length of Stay**
 - Average = 3.2 days
 - Median = 2 days
 - Mode = 2 days
 - Range 1 – 27 days





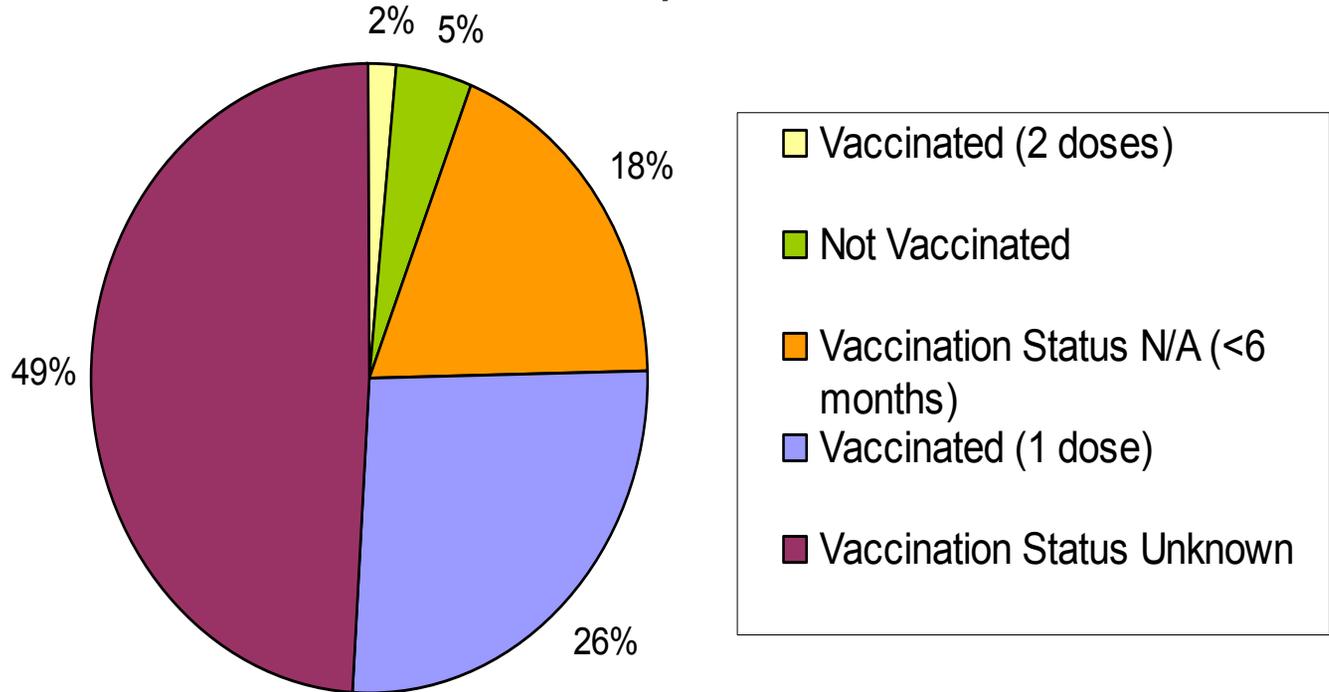
Data as of 7 May 2008

**Laboratory Confirmed Hospitalized Influenza Cases
by Health Status
Children's Hospitals and Clinics of MN
Oct 2007 - Apr 2008**



Data as of 7 May 2008

Laboratory Confirmed Hospitalized Influenza Cases
by Vaccination Status
Children's Hospitals and Clinics of MN
Oct 2007 - Apr 2008

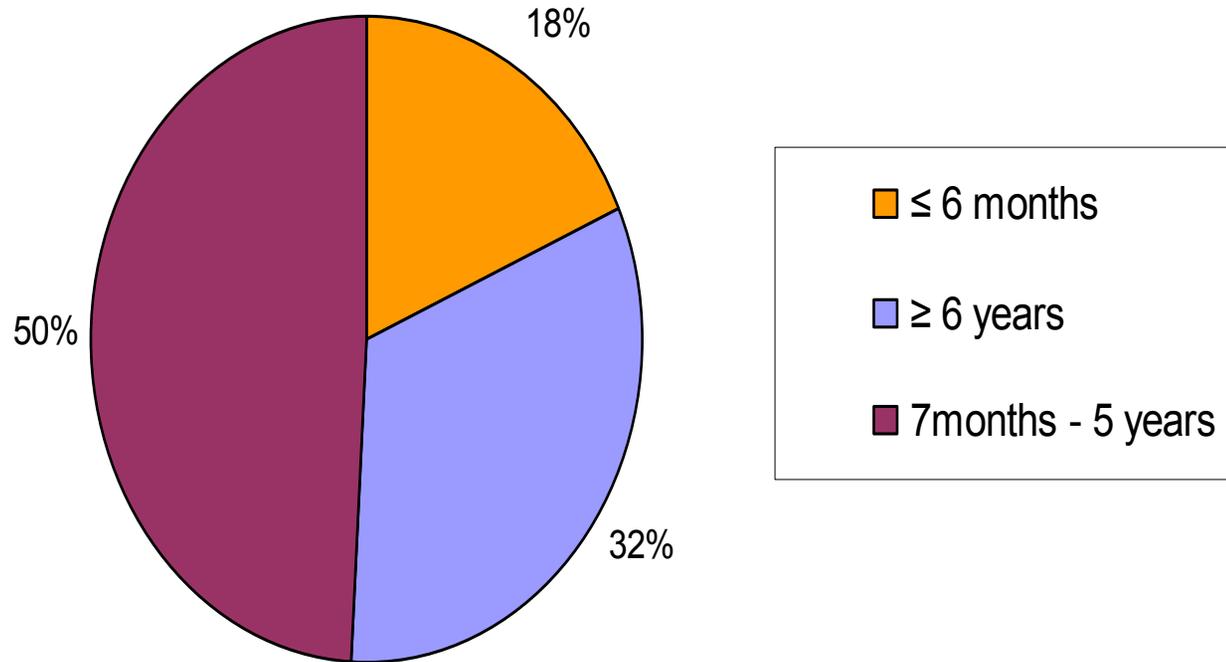


Note: Vaccination status determined using EMR visit notes and MIIC (MN Immunization Information Connection)

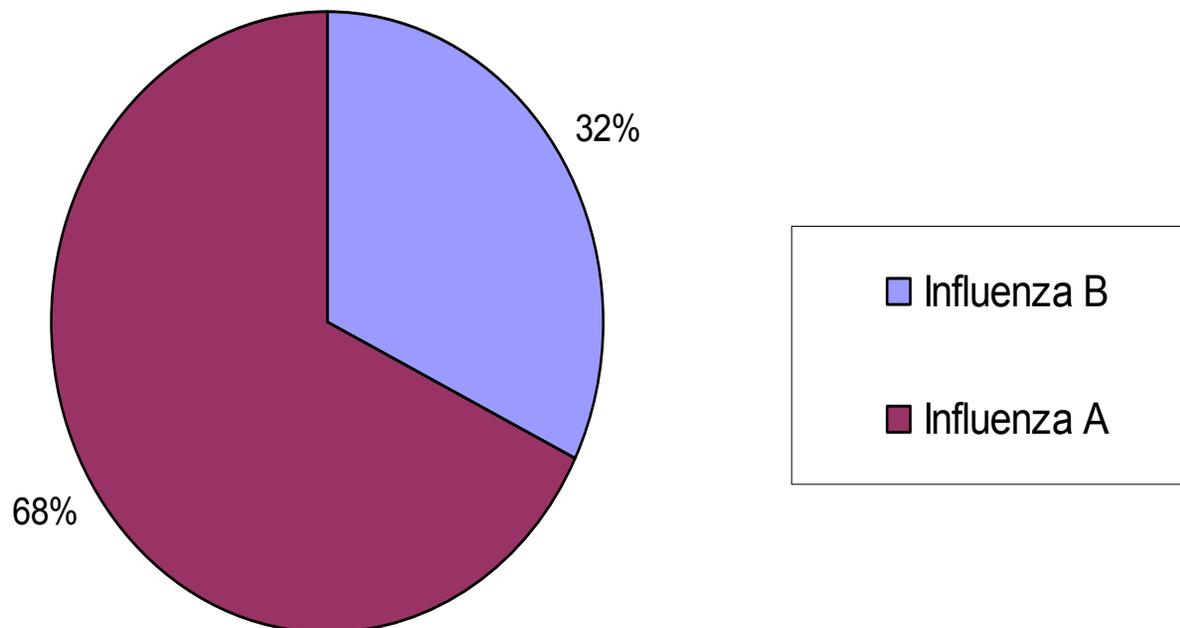
- **Of the vaccination status unknowns, 15% (n=10) were previously hospitalized or seen at a Children's clinic since September 2007 (Missed Opportunities?)**

Data as of 7 May 2008

Laboratory Confirmed Hospitalized Influenza Cases
by Age
Children's Hospitals and Clinics of MN
Oct 2007 - Apr 2008



Laboratory Confirmed Hospitalized Influenza Cases
by Type
Children's Hospitals and Clinics of MN
Oct 2007 - Apr 2008

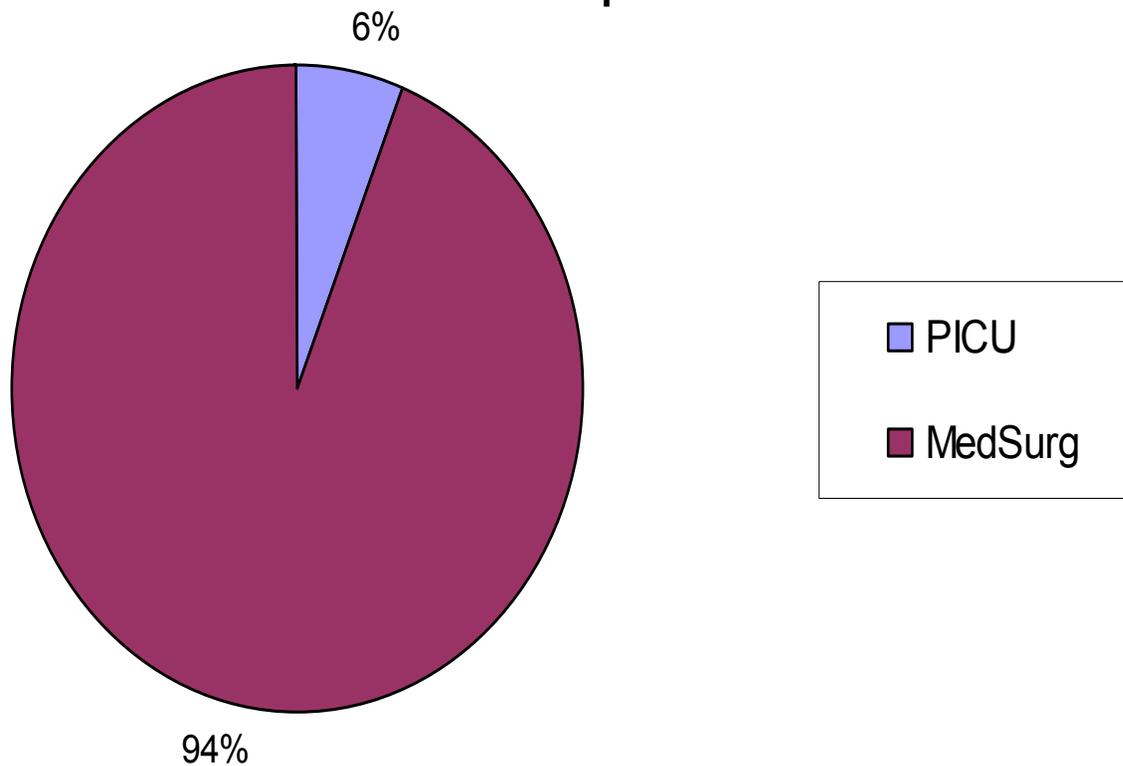


Data as of 7 May 2008

Laboratory Confirmed Hospitalized Influenza Cases
by Location

Children's Hospitals and Clinics of MN

Oct 2007 - Apr 2008



Data as of 7 May 2008



Summary

- **Clarify the source of myths and misperceptions for vaccinating pregnant women, infants and children**
- **Educate about safety of vaccine and real threat to children from disease**
- **Share stories**
- **Reduce missed opportunities to vaccinate**
- **Be a role model by vaccinating yourself**