

Communication Challenges and Opportunities in the 2013-14 Influenza Season: Vaccine Effectiveness and Options

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Objectives

- ❑ Recap the 2012-13 season communication environment
- ❑ Describe considerations and messages for communicating about flu VE and availability of quadrivalent vaccines
- ❑ Discuss CDC 2013-14 seasonal influenza communications planning activities

The 2012-13 Flu Season

- ❑ An early and active influenza season that caught people's attention, starting with NIVW press conference in early December
 - "CDC warns flu season off to earliest start in decade" *CBS News*
 - "Flu season could be a bad one, health officials say" *NBC News*
 - "Flu Season's Early Start Signals It Could Be Severe" *WSJ*
 - "U.S. flu season gets strong early start" *USA Today*
- ❑ Another message:
 - Most flu that is spreading is very well matched with this year's flu vaccine

The 2012-13 Flu Season

- ❑ January 11 and 18 - CDC press conferences
 - Influenza activity remains elevated in most of the U.S., and likely to continue for several more weeks.
 - Early flu VE estimate: overall 62 percent. That means that if you got vaccinated you're about 60 percent less likely to get the flu that requires you to go to your doctor. There are differences in different groups. Those differences have not yet been fully assessed.
 - Spot shortages of vaccine. Call your provider ahead of time, you may have to check in several places to find vaccine.
 - Shaping up to be a worse than average season and a bad season particularly for the elderly, H3N2 predominant strain
 - Intermittent shortages of oral suspension form of Tamiflu

The 2012-13 Flu Season: January Headlines

- ❑ "Flu Wave Stresses Out Hospitals" *NPR*
- ❑ "Boston flu outbreak prompts mayor to declare public health emergency" *The Guardian*
- ❑ "Flu spreads to all 50 states but on the wane in parts" *NBC News*
- ❑ "Early, severe flu season makes for 'supposed' vaccine shortage" *FOX News*
- ❑ "Florida's 3rd pediatric flu death since October 2012 is Duval victim" *The Florida Times-Union*
- ❑ "12-year-old girl fourth El Paso flu-related death" *El Paso Times*
- ❑ "Flu closes Westview, Wyandotte schools" *The Joplin Globe*
- ❑ "NH flu deaths increase to 35, including 1st child" *NewsSource*
- ❑ "Indiana flu deaths rise by three to 43" *Goshen News (IN)*

CDC Home
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives. Protecting People.™

A-Z Index A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z #

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)

MMWR

Recommend 665 Tweet 29 Share

Interim Adjusted Estimates of Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness – United States, February 2013

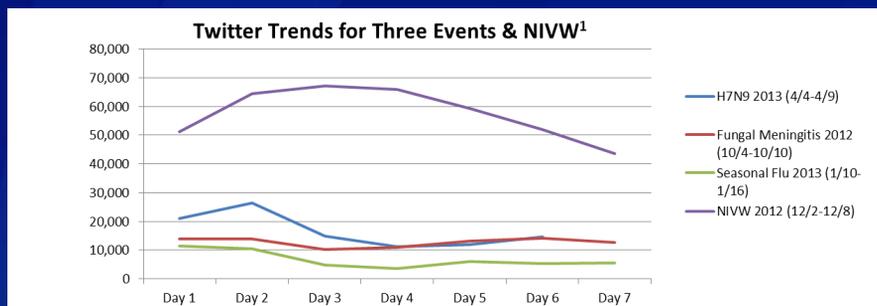
Weekly
February 22, 2013 / 62(07):119-123

Early influenza activity during the 2012–13 season (1) enabled estimation of the unadjusted effectiveness of the seasonal influenza vaccine (2). This report presents updated adjusted estimates based on 2,697 children and adults enrolled in the U.S. Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness (Flu VE) Network during December 3, 2012–January 19, 2013. During this period, overall vaccine effectiveness (VE) (adjusted for age, site, race/ethnicity, self-rated health, and days from illness onset to enrollment) against influenza A and B virus infections associated with medically attended acute respiratory illness was 56%, similar to the earlier interim estimate (62%) (2). VE was estimated as 47% against influenza A (H3N2) virus infections and 67% against B virus infections. When stratified by age group, the point estimates for VE against influenza A (H3N2) and B infections were largely consistent across age groups, with the exception that lower VE against influenza A (H3N2) was observed among adults aged ≥65 years. These adjusted VE estimates indicate that vaccination with the 2012–13 influenza season vaccine reduced the risk for outpatient medical visits resulting from influenza by approximately one half to two thirds

Seasonal Flu Vaccine Effectiveness: February 2013 Headlines

- “Flu shot doing poor job of protecting elderly”
Associated Press
- “CDC says flu vaccine barely worked in over-65s
this year” - *NBC News*
- “Flu vaccine barely worked in people 65 and
older” – *USA Today*
- “Flu vaccine worked in just over half of
Americans who got it” - *Reuters*

News of Early Flu Season in Social Media



cdc.gov/flu Web Traffic

- Significant increases in December 2012 with 3.7 million views that month (average 141,000/day).
 - This is three times the number of page views when compared to December 2011, and the highest number of views since the 2009 H1N1 pandemic.
- Web activity for January 2013 was nearly triple the December count, with 10.3 million page views (332,000/day).
- For the entire CDC.gov domain, 7 of the top 10 web pages (in page views) for January were seasonal flu pages.
- In January, there were 99,100 page views of content by users of the new CDC Influenza iPad App, and the App was downloaded over 8,000 times (267/day).



The image shows a screenshot of a CNN news article. At the top, there is a red navigation bar with the CNN logo and various links for different editions and languages. Below this, there is a section titled "ON 中国 CHINA" with a sub-header "Part of complete coverage on On China". The main headline reads "WHO: H7N9 virus 'one of the most lethal so far'", attributed to Peter Shadbolt, CNN, updated on April 26, 2013. Below the text is a video player showing a laboratory setting with a person in a white lab coat and blue cap working at a workstation. A "Click to play" button is overlaid on the video.

Looking Ahead to the 2013-14 Influenza Season:

Communicating About Flu Vaccine Effectiveness and Quadrivalent Vaccines

Considerations

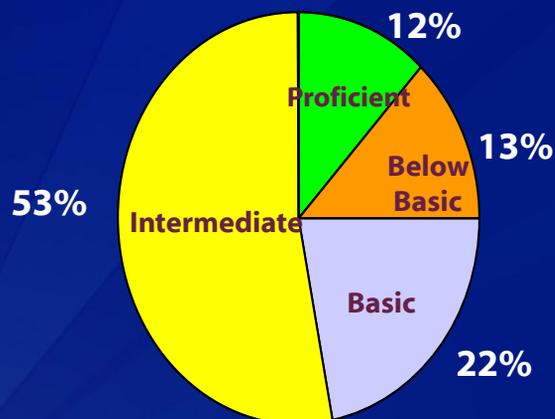
- The 2012-13 season was a reminder that:
 - seasonal influenza viruses can cause significant and severe illness and death
 - 138 pediatric deaths thus far
 - the timing and duration of influenza seasons varies and is unpredictable
 - news of an early and potentially “bad” flu season contributes to demand for vaccine
 - flu vaccines don’t protect many older adults as well as we want them to

Considerations

- Most adults have positive impressions of the flu vaccine.
 - 81% of adults believe the flu vaccine is very effective or somewhat effective.⁽¹⁾
- Most members of the general public likely have limited knowledge of the composition of flu vaccines – and aren't terribly interested
- VE and quadrivalent vaccines are complex topics to explain
 - Potential for much misunderstanding

1) March 2012 National Flu Survey

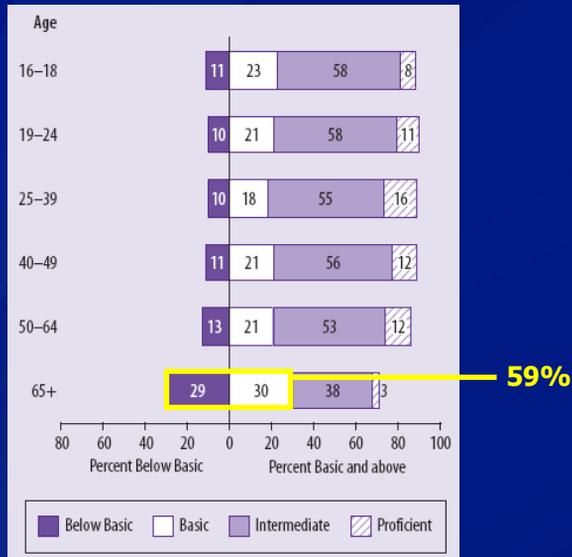
Health Literacy in America: Results from the NAAL



100+ Million Adults have Basic or Below Basic Health Literacy

Kutner et al. National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2006

Health Literacy by Age



Kutner et al. National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003

Communicating About Flu Vaccine Effectiveness

"The best is the enemy of the good."
-Voltaire



Flu Vaccine Effectiveness: The 2012-13 Season

- Last season, vaccination reduced the risk of having to go to the doctor from flu by more than half across all age groups (with the exception of people 65 and older).
 - Flu vaccination, even with moderate effectiveness, can also reduce: flu-related illness, antibiotic use, time lost from work, hospitalizations, and deaths.
- Unfortunately, last season's vaccine worked much less well in people 65 and older against influenza A H3N2.
 - It's possible that people 65 and older did not mount a good immune response to the H3N2 antibody in the 2012-2013 vaccine.
 - As we get older, our bodies don't respond to vaccination – or infection - as well as when we are younger.

Flu Vaccine Effectiveness Messages: Communicating Variability

- How well the flu vaccine works can vary by year.
- The two biggest factors impacting how well the vaccine works are
 - if the vaccine viruses are matched to viruses causing illness
 - the health of the person being vaccinated.
- Studies show that with a good match, flu vaccine can reduce the risk having to go to the doctor for flu by about 60% among the overall population.
 - This number may be higher for some groups of people and lower for others. For example, older people with weaker immune systems may respond less well to vaccination.
- When the flu vaccine is not well matched to circulating viruses, possible that no benefit may be observed.

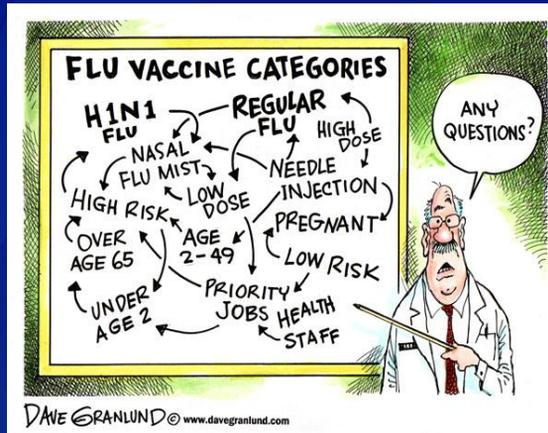
Flu Vaccine Effectiveness: Messages for Older Adults

- We are concerned that the news about last season's vaccine may keep some older adults from seeking vaccination during the upcoming season.
- It has been recognized for many years that people 65 years and older are at greater risk of serious complications from the flu compared with young, healthy adults.
- It's estimated that 90 percent of seasonal flu-related deaths and more than 60 percent of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations in the US each year occur in people 65 years and older.
- The best way to prevent the flu is with a flu vaccine.
- People 65 years and older may choose a regular dose flu vaccine or a flu vaccine designed for people 65 and older with a higher dose.

Flu Vaccine Effectiveness: Messages for Older Adults

- Unlike the 2012-13 season, during other seasons, studies have measured a reduced risk among vaccinated people 65 and older of having to go to the doctor from flu.
- There also is some data that vaccination can make your illness milder if you do get sick.
- Vaccination also can reduce the risk of more serious flu outcomes like hospitalizations and deaths.
- Even if you've been vaccinated,
 - take everyday preventive actions including covering coughs, washing hands often, and avoiding people who are sick.
 - seek medical advice quickly if you develop flu symptoms to see whether you might need medical evaluation or treatment with antiviral drugs.

Communicating About Quadrivalent Flu Vaccines



Sample Quadrivalent Flu Vaccine Messages

- Quadrivalent flu vaccines are designed to protect against four different flu viruses.
- For years, flu vaccines have been trivalent, or designed to protect against three different flu viruses.
- Adding an extra virus to the vaccine should give broader protection against influenza each season.

Sample Quadrivalent Flu Vaccine Messages

- There are many different flu viruses that spread each season.
- Most fall into four main groups: two “influenza A” groups and two “influenza B” groups.
- Trivalent flu vaccines protect against the two A viruses and one of the B viruses.
- For years, experts had to choose between the two very different B viruses to add to trivalent vaccines, even though both groups of B viruses spread every year.
- This left people unprotected against the second group of B viruses.
- By adding another B virus to the vaccine, quadrivalent vaccine may give broader protection.

Sample Quadrivalent Flu Vaccine Safety Messages

- Quadrivalent vaccines are made in the same way that trivalent flu vaccines have been made for many years. The only difference is the addition of another vaccine virus.
- Studies have shown that quadrivalent vaccines have a similar safety profile as seasonal trivalent flu vaccines, with similar—mostly mild—side effects. Hundreds of millions of people have safely gotten trivalent flu vaccines.

Sample Quadrivalent Flu Vaccine Supply Messages

- Most flu vaccines available during the 2013–14 flu season will still be trivalent.
- Quadrivalent flu vaccines are available as both a nasal spray and a shot.
- All nasal spray vaccine will be quadrivalent vaccine.
- Some quadrivalent flu shots will be available, but most will still be trivalent.
 - Additional quadrivalent vaccines are being developed.
 - In the future, quadrivalent flu vaccines may replace trivalent vaccines.
- CDC is not recommending quadrivalent vaccines over trivalent vaccines. The most important thing is that you be vaccinated.

Preparing for the 2013-14 Influenza Season

- Conducting a nationally representative survey to assess
 - Perceptions of this past flu season, vaccination behaviors, beliefs and attitudes toward flu vaccine, and more
- Will conduct on-line and limited in-person focus groups to
 - Explore knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about influenza and flu vaccines
 - Test flu vaccine effectiveness and quadrivalent flu vaccine messages
- Will share results and plans

Preparing for the 2013-14 Influenza Season

- Planning to participate in National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) annual influenza vaccination press event September 26
- **2013 National Influenza Vaccination Week will be held December 8-14**
- Free evergreen flu vaccine promotional materials are for use/download/order now at cdc.gov/flu/freeresources
 - Print
 - Video/audio
 - Web tools
 - Mobile content and apps
 - Images

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

National Center for Immunization & Respiratory Diseases
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