

Pharmacy shines at National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit awards

Pharmacists and student pharmacists are essential to several programs that won 2017 Immunization Excellence Awards presented by the National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit (NAIIS) in Atlanta in May. The awards honor individuals and programs for their outstanding innovation and contributions toward improving vaccination rates in their communities.

Vaccination coverage in California

The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) received the “Immunization Neighborhood” Award for instituting policy changes that compel Medi-Cal fee-for-service and managed care programs to cover, as part of the pharmacy benefit, all vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The changes came after DHCS’s sister agency, the California Department of Public Health, noted that some beneficiaries were having difficulty accessing vaccines.

After conducting research with the medical community, DHCS discovered what Michael Wofford, PharmD, chief of the pharmacy policy branch in the Medi-Cal pharmacy benefits division, called a “clunky process.”

“Since pharmacists are able to administer vaccinations, physicians said it wasn’t worth it to them to keep the vaccines in stock, and they were referring out to pharmacies [for immunizations in general]. Then pharmacists had to order vaccines and send them over to the physicians to administer [so physicians could bill Medi-Cal],” said Wofford, who spearheaded the policy changes. “We decided the best way to go about it was to make vaccination a pharmacy benefit.”

Once the policy was in place, DHCS sent a letter to Medi-Cal’s pharmacy networks informing them that they could assess for vaccination status, administer vaccines, and bill Medi-Cal for vaccination services. Since then, immunizations jumped from 3,000 in October 2015 to 9,388 in October of 2016.

Wofford said the NAIIS award is an honor. “It’s validating. A national

entity said ‘Look at this and all you did. You made a difference in the health of a lot of people.’ The affirmation is nice because we don’t always get that in government.”

Student pharmacist immunization clinics in Iowa

The Laura Scott 2016–17 Outstanding Influenza Season Activities Award went to the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy for its student-run immunization clinics. Under the supervision of immunizing pharmacists, student pharmacists administer all vaccinations in the clinic. In the 2016–17 influenza season, 111 student pharmacists provided 6,820 immunizations at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, University of Iowa Student Health

Services, and local pharmacies, up from 3,066 immunizations in the 2015–16 flu season and 813 immunizations in the 2014–15 flu season.

Third-year student pharmacist Ethan Sabers, who led the 2016–17 campaign, attributes the growth to approaching area hospitals and clinics before flu season started. Being organized also helped—he recruited and coordinated clinic staff via internet and Google Docs and tracked how many immunizations each student pharmacist provided at each clinic.

The clinics are a valuable part of pharmacy education, Sabers said. “It gets student pharmacists out into the community and gives them key experience with patient care, and it provides good mentorship opportunities between preceptors and student pharmacists.”

Sabers added that the award is a nice boost for all who took part in the clinics. “It’s great for our students to be recognized for all the hard work they put in over the flu season, and for the College of Pharmacy to get the recognition it’s getting.”

Terri D’Arrigo, reporter

NAIIS Immunization Excellence Awards

Adult Immunization Champion Award

National Winners

Henry Ford Health System
Ann L. McGaffey, MD FAAFP*

Honorable Mentions

Ochsner Health System*
Mihran Chaprazian, BSPHarm*

Corporate Campaign Award

National Winner

HMA Associates, Inc., with Kaufman & Associates, Inc.*

Honorable Mention

VaxServe, Inc.*

“Immunization Neighborhood” Award

National Winners

California Department of Health Care Services*
Springfield Public Schools (MO)

Laura Scott 2016–17 Outstanding Influenza Season Activities Award

National Winner

University of Iowa College of Pharmacy*

Honorable Mention

Washington State Department of Health*

Adult Immunization Publication Award

National Winner

University of Pittsburgh Vaccine Research Group (PittVax)

Non-Healthcare Employer Campaign Award

National Winner

Orange County Public Schools (FL)*

Honorable Mention

Baxter

*Programs that engaged pharmacists.

To view information about the awards program and to read more about the award recipients, visit <https://www.izsummitpartners.org/immunization-excellence-awards/>.