



# Impact of Influenza Policies Among New Hampshire Healthcare Personnel



Callie Therrien, MPH Candidate, University of New Hampshire

Karla Armenti MS, ScD, Program Director, NH Occupational Health Surveillance Program, University of New Hampshire

## Abstract

- Objective:** To enhance the NH Occupational Health Surveillance Program's surveillance activities of healthcare personnel (HCP) by analyzing HCP influenza vaccination rates, reasons for receiving and not receiving the influenza vaccine, and how influenza policies influence occupational safety and health.
- Methods:** A 10-minute anonymous, online survey was created and distributed to NH hospitals. Survey results were analyzed using Excel and Qualtrics. A focus group comprised of 8-10 participants was conducted at a NH hospital.
- Results:** Nearly 95% of respondents received the flu vaccine this season. The top reason for receiving the flu vaccine was, "My employer requires me to be vaccinated." The top reason for not receiving the vaccine was, "I feel it infringes on my rights." 82% of respondents reported that the education provided to them on the benefits of flu vaccine did not motivate them to receive the vaccine.
- Conclusions:** Uptake of flu vaccine among healthcare personnel is influenced by workplace policies, personal beliefs, and incentives and benefits; however it is not influenced by facility educational efforts. Healthcare facilities should incorporate other strategies outside of education on the benefits of flu vaccination to increase HCP vaccination rates.

## Introduction

- HCP can become infected with the influenza virus through contact with infected patients and can transmit influenza to patients and other HCP. There is much debate over the requirement to receive the flu vaccine as a condition of employment in healthcare facilities.
- One CDC survey found that national influenza vaccination rates among HCP for the 2012-2013 influenza season was 72%. A NH study using 2011-2012 BRFSS data found the percentage of NH HCP was approximately 62%. This falls significantly short of the Healthy People 2020 goal of 90%.
- While it is important to offer the flu vaccine to HCP, workplace policies should be in synergy with other policies on safety, health, and wellness.

## Methodology

- Literature review of influenza vaccination policies, reasons for and against vaccination, and attitudes of influenza vaccinations among HCP.
- Online, anonymous survey distributed to all NH hospitals through HR Department.
- Response data analyzed via Qualtrics and Excel.
- Focus group discussion of eight participants conducted at a NH hospital.

## Results

### Survey Results

- 518 responses
- 26 hospitals surveyed
- 94.79% of respondents received the flu vaccine

Table 1. Reasons for receiving flu vaccine (Top 5 responses)

My employer requires me to be vaccinated for the flu
To protect myself, family and patients from the flu
The flu vaccine was offered free of charge at work
It is easy to get the flu vaccine at work
To avoid missing work

Table 2. Reasons for not receiving flu vaccine (Top 5 responses)

I feel it infringes on my rights
I don't think that flu vaccines work
I am worried how the ingredients might affect me
I dislike needles
My employer didn't require me to have a vaccination

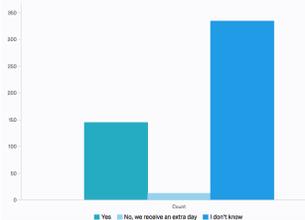
Table 3: Flu Vaccine by how long in healthcare field

Less than 5 years	6-10 years	Over than 10 years	Total
18.76% 89	17.30% 82	63.92% 303	474
15.38% 4	19.23% 5	65.38% 17	26

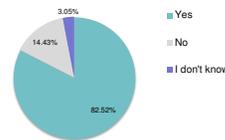
### Did not receive flu vaccine (occupation)

- Administrative or Clerical, Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse, and Licensed Nursing Assistant or Medical Assistant represent 73.91% of those who did not receive the flu vaccine

If you have a reaction (for example a medical event or allergic reaction) to the flu vaccine are you required to take your own sick/leave time to recover?



Is a flu vaccination required to be employed at your facility?



Of those with a vaccination requirement at work, 395 received the flu vaccine and 13 did not.

Did the educational information provided to you by your employer (handouts, pamphlets, presentations) influence you to receive the flu vaccine?

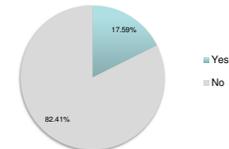


Table 4. Occupation by flu vaccine

Occupation	Received the flu vaccine	Did not receive the flu vaccine
Administrative or Clerical (e.g. Reception, Accounting, Customer Service, and non-clinical support staff)	27.90%	39.13%
Contractor or Consultant	1.12%	0.00%
Dining Services	2.46%	0.00%
Environmental Services (e.g. Housekeeping, Maintenance, Facilities, and Security)	2.46%	8.70%
Licensed Nursing Assistant or Medical Assistant	10.27%	13.04%
Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant	3.13%	0.00%
Pharmacist	1.56%	0.00%
Physician	2.23%	0.00%
Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse	26.56%	21.74%
Management	12.72%	8.70%
Medical Technician	9.15%	8.70%
Volunteer	0.45%	0.00%

### Focus Group Results

- 8 participants
- 62.5% received flu vaccine
- 2-30 years in healthcare industry
- Flu vaccine should be mandated for certain vulnerable groups
- Flu vaccine is a personal decision – not motivated by education
- Many motivated by incentives (particularly monetary) to receive the flu vaccine

## Strengths and Limitations

- Strengths:** Large number of respondents
- Limitations**
  - Excluded HCP who did not have access to computers
  - Not representative of all HCP in all hospitals
  - Self-reported responses

## Recommendations

- Nearly one-third of respondents indicated they had to take their own sick time if they had a reaction to the flu vaccine (while over two-thirds of respondents indicated they "didn't know" their facility policy). Based on this, it is recommended that healthcare facilities adopt a policy that allows for additional paid sick leave for HCP that have a reaction when they receive the flu vaccine.
- Survey and focus group results indicate that HCP are not influenced by the education provided to them on the benefits of the flu vaccine. Based on these results, it is recommended that healthcare facilities adopt diverse strategies to increase flu vaccine rates, such as:
  - Including HCP in the educational development process;
  - Developing peer to peer education programs;
  - Incentive programs (cash incentive, extra paid leave time, insurance benefits, etc.)
- Policies mandating HCP influenza vaccination may impact facility resources and be burdensome to staff. Comprehensive strategies that include education, easy access to vaccination at no cost, and provide benefits for employees with potential but rare vaccine reactions may increase HCP vaccination rates.

## References

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