

A national pharmacy chain's ability to administer influenza vaccinations to medically underserved areas in the United States

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BACKGROUND

- The goals of this study were (a) to identify the proportion of Walgreens retail pharmacies that provide influenza vaccinations to patients in Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs), and (b) to describe the location of MUAs relative to this chain's retail pharmacies using drive time distance.
- Walgreens, a national retail pharmacy chain, has the ability to provide expanded services, such as vaccine administration, to MUAs across the United States.

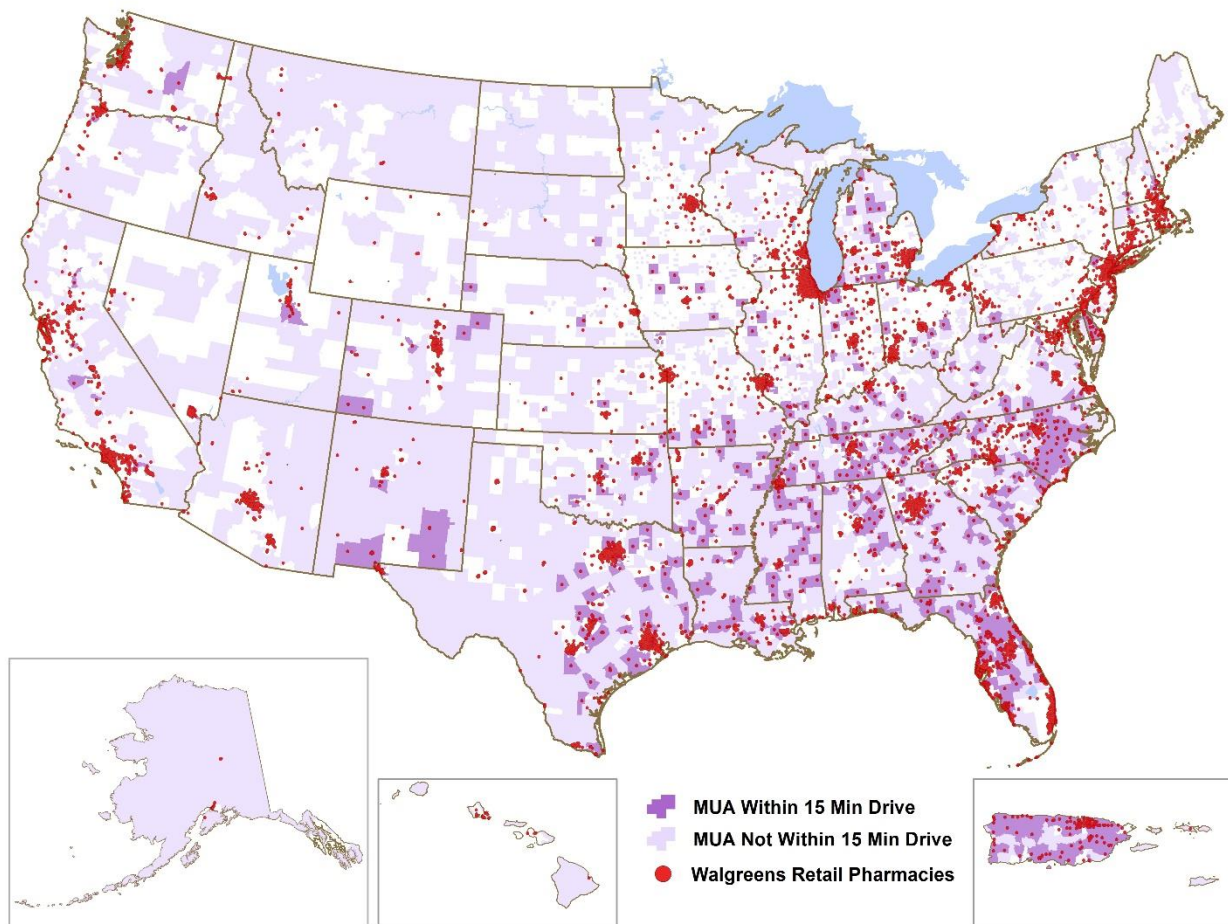
METHODS

- We identified influenza vaccines administered in Walgreens retail pharmacy claims data using national drug code from August 2017 to January 2018. A simple random sample of influenza vaccine patients (N=100,000) was geocoded to identify MUA residents.
- Pharmacies that administered influenza vaccinations to any MUA residents from the sample were counted as serving an MUA population. Geospatial mapping was used to identify the proportion of MUAs located within a 15-minute drive time of each of these pharmacies.

RESULTS

- During the 2017/18 flu season, Walgreens retail pharmacies provided millions of influenza vaccinations. In our random sample, 59% of these pharmacies (n=4,765) provided influenza vaccinations to patients from an MUA. Furthermore, 40% of MUAs (n=1,689), representing two-thirds of the MUA population in the United States, were located within a 15-minute drive time of a Walgreens pharmacy.

Figure 1: MUAs within a 15-minute drive time of a Walgreens Retail Pharmacy^{1, 2, 3}



1. MUA data is from <https://data.hrsa.gov/data/download> as of January 2018.
2. Walgreens locations represent open retail pharmacies as of January 2018.
3. MUA's were defined as being within a 15-minute drive of Walgreens if the MUA centroid overlapped with the 15-minute drive time area of a Walgreens.

CONCLUSIONS

- These results demonstrate the ability of a national retail pharmacy chain to provide influenza vaccines to MUA populations throughout the United States.
- Walgreens retail pharmacies are able to provide broad access to preventive medical services such as vaccinations to at-risk populations and are located in areas accessible to many living in MUAs.

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