



# Increasing the Uptake of Herpes Zoster Vaccinations via Community Pharmacies

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Granting state-authorized pharmacist immunization privileges for herpes zoster vaccine significantly improved herpes zoster vaccination uptake rates.

## BACKGROUND

- Herpes zoster (shingles) is a disease characterized by a painful skin rash and blistering.<sup>1</sup>
- One million cases are estimated to occur annually in the United States, half of which are among the elderly.<sup>1</sup>
- If untreated, 50% of persons  $\geq 60$  years old develop postherpetic neuralgia (PHN), a debilitating syndrome that can persist for years.<sup>2</sup>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the herpes zoster vaccine to persons aged  $\geq 60$  years to reduce the risk of shingles and PHN<sup>2</sup>; however, coverage levels are estimated at only 15.8%.<sup>3</sup>
- Physicians typically do not stock the vaccine due to cost, storage requirements, and limited shelf life.<sup>4,5</sup>
- Pharmacists at retail pharmacies are uniquely positioned to administer these vaccinations and to share vaccination records with patients' physicians.<sup>6</sup>
- Traditionally, pharmacists provided vaccinations only per physician's order.<sup>7</sup>
- Recently, Massachusetts (May 2012), Florida (July 2012), and New York (October 2012) passed legislation allowing pharmacists to administer herpes zoster vaccinations per protocol or with a patient-specific prescription.<sup>7</sup>

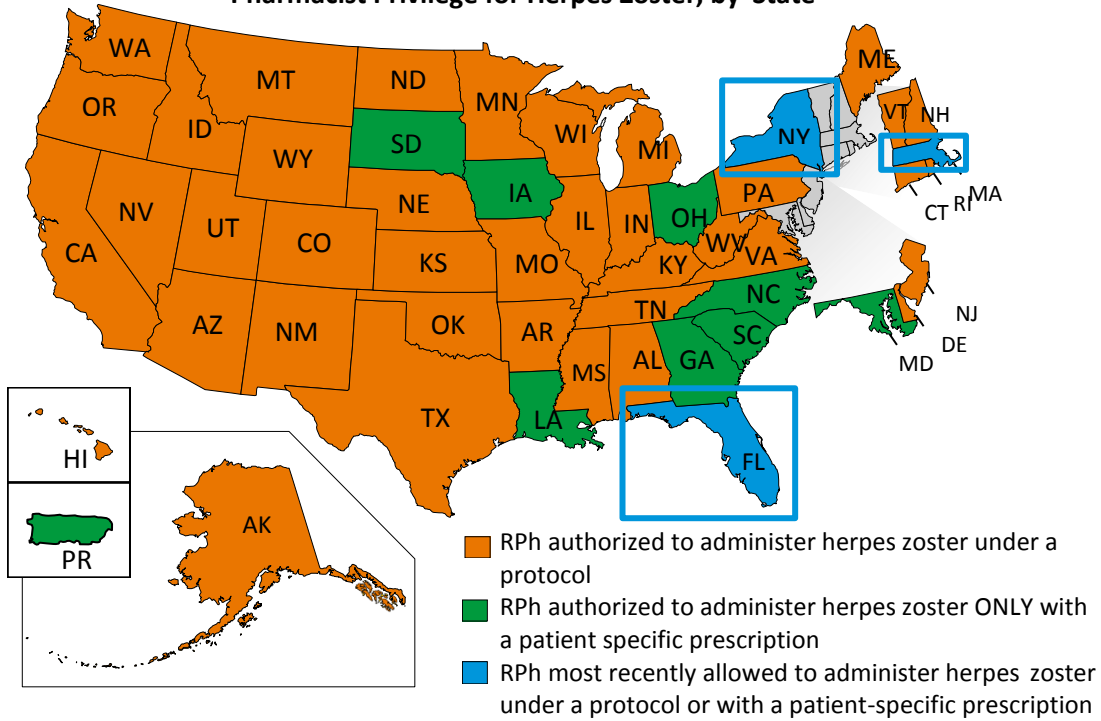
## OBJECTIVE

- To investigate the uptake of herpes zoster vaccinations in community pharmacies and the influence of state-authorized pharmacist immunization privileges on vaccination uptake rates.

## METHODS

- This cross-sectional study analyzed herpes zoster vaccination records from 2012 administered at the Walgreens pharmacy chain.
- Vaccination uptake rates were calculated as the number of patients aged  $\geq 60$  years who received a herpes zoster vaccine per 1,000 pharmacy patients  $\geq 60$  years filling a prescription for any medication at Walgreens during the study period.
- Rates of vaccinations were examined three months before and after implementation of pharmacist immunization privilege for herpes zoster in Massachusetts (May 2012), Florida (July 2012), and New York (October 2012).

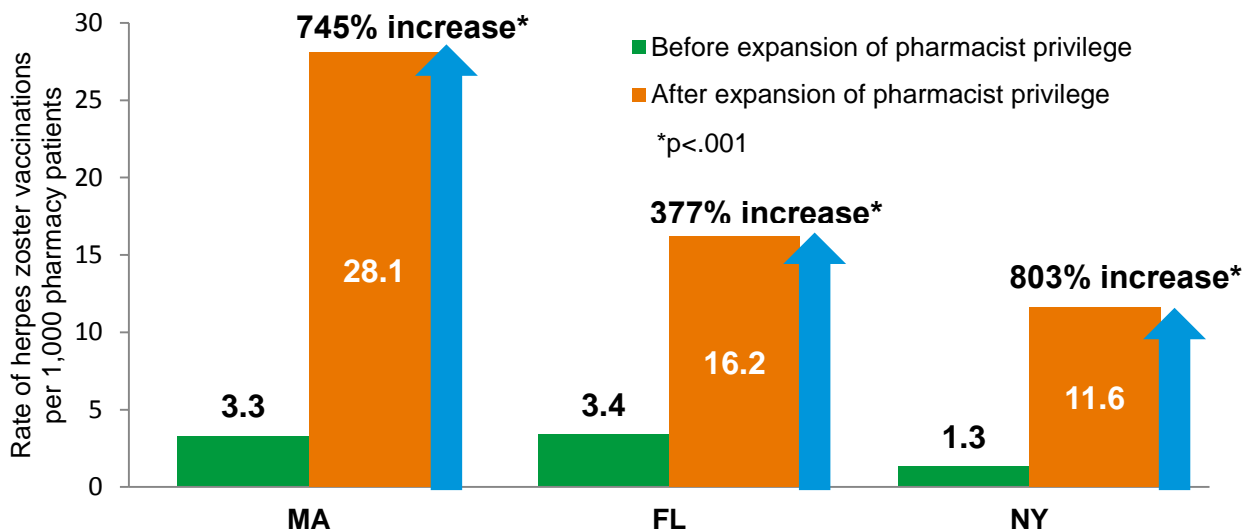
### Pharmacist Privilege for Herpes Zoster, by State



*\*DC authorized to administer Zostavax with a patient specific prescription*

## RESULTS

- In Massachusetts, the rate of herpes zoster vaccinations per 1,000 pharmacy patients increased from 3.3 to 28.1 after pharmacists were authorized to administer vaccinations under a protocol, a 745% increase ( $P < .001$ ).
- In Florida, the vaccination rate increased from 3.4 to 16.2, a 377% increase ( $P < .001$ ). In New York, vaccination rate increased 803% from 1.3 to 11.6 ( $P < .001$ ). These states authorized pharmacists to administer vaccinations with a patient-specific prescription.



## CONCLUSIONS

- After the legislation, study pharmacies had a significantly higher rate of herpes zoster vaccinations than prior to the legislation. Uptake rate was highest in Massachusetts, which granted pharmacists full authorization to administer the vaccinations.
- Results suggest that community pharmacists provided additional access and convenience to herpes zoster vaccinations for high-risk populations, resulting in increased uptake.
- Given the suboptimal vaccination rate of herpes zoster, states with limited or no immunization authorization for pharmacists should consider expanding pharmacist privileges.

### References:

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