Influenza Vaccination Uptake among Diabetes Patients in Community Pharmacies

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Community pharmacies provide additional access and convenience as well as immunization counseling in order to maximize essential care for diabetes patients. The study found that 86.2% of patients immunized in the study were vaccinated before peak flu season.

BACKGROUND

- Individuals living with diabetes mellitus are six times more likely to be hospitalized with influenza during flu epidemics.¹
- People with diabetes are highly recommended to receive a seasonal influenza and pneumococcal disease vaccination to reduce the risk of health complications, hospitalization, and mortality.²
- Influenza vaccination has been associated with a 54% reduction in hospitalizations and a 58% reduction in deaths among patients with diabetes.³
- The CDC refers to pharmacies as nontraditional locations for receiving vaccines, offering advantages such as community-based locations, access, and convenience.⁴
- Community pharmacies are uniquely positioned to increase immunization rates among these high-risk individuals. Pharmacists may be especially effective in immunizing diabetes patients who are more likely to utilize pharmacy services for prescription medication than the general population.⁵
- In addition, pharmacists may conduct a comprehensive immunization assessment at the time of vaccination to assist patients with determining which other immunizations they may need based upon recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

OBJECTIVE

- The objective of this study was to investigate uptake of seasonal influenza and pneumococcal disease vaccinations among persons with diabetes utilizing a community pharmacy chain.

METHODS

- A retrospective data review was conducted on all vaccinations administered at the Walgreens pharmacy chain between August 2012 and July 2013.
- Diabetes patients were defined as those having one or more prescriptions for diabetes medication filled at the pharmacy.
- The volume of influenza and pneumococcal disease vaccinations among diabetes patients was determined.
During the study period, there were 361,609 influenza and 34,924 pneumococcal vaccinations administered to diabetes patients at the community pharmacy.

Most (29,544 or 84.6%) of the diabetes patients receiving a pneumococcal vaccination also received an influenza vaccination (Figure 1).

86.2% of the influenza vaccinations administered to diabetes patients were between August and December, offering maximum protection early in the influenza season (Figure 2). The 2012-2013 influenza season peaked in December, when the rate of influenza-like illness (ILI) was 4.8% - more than twice the national baseline rate of 2.2%, which is the threshold at which flu activity is considered above normal (determined by the CDC).6

Figure 1. Diabetes patients receiving Immunizations: Distribution of vaccine type

Figure 2. Flu shots administered to diabetes patients and influenza activity in the United States

*Monthly averages from CDC FluView influenza surveillance data
CONCLUSIONS

• Community pharmacies provide additional access and convenience as well as immunization counseling in order to maximize essential care for diabetes patients, who are at increased risk for health complications due to influenza and pneumococcal disease.

• This study highlights the important role of community pharmacies in immunizing the population, including high-risk patients, before the peak of influenza season.

References:

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