The Lack of Vaccination Rates Amongst Low Socioeconomic Populations

A discussion of the factors influencing low vaccination rates including no health insurance, lack of knowledge, and inaccessible health care facilities

Tag Words: vaccines; vaccinations; health; low socioeconomic status; healthcare; language barriers; insurance; New Brunswick, NJ; minorities; healthcare accessibility; influenza; human papilloma virus; pneumonia; HPV; history of vaccines; primary prevention; vaccination rates; low vaccination rates; PPV

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Summary:

Although many of us understand the importance of vaccinations and the benefits that come with receiving vaccines for the prevention of different diseases, we have been experiencing a trend that shows low vaccination rates amongst individuals of low socioeconomic status and minorities. First we will focus on a general explanation of the history of vaccines and why there has been a lower rate of vaccination within lower socioeconomic status populations and minorities. Then, we will discuss the many factors that have led to low vaccination rates such as, the lack of health insurance, accessibility of healthcare, language barriers between patients and healthcare providers, lack of knowledge of vaccines, folktales and rumors that due to a lack of knowledge deter individuals from receiving such vaccines. In order to bring awareness on this issue we will be concentrating on informing the population of New Brunswick, NJ what the benefits of receiving healthcare and vaccinations are, where healthcare is available to them and cost alternative options for vaccines. Since we understand that some vaccines are provided to children before they enter school, we will focus on vaccines that are recommended to individuals of all ages and that are beneficial to them, such as, Influenza, Human Papilloma Virus, and Pneumonia vaccines. It is our intention to reach and inform the community of New Brunswick, NJ by providing them with pamphlets that contain information on the three vaccines mentioned above and where they could receive these. (LR)

Video link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ak7GCA5R_zg&feature=channel_video_title
Introduction:

A decrease in vaccination rates amongst minority and low socioeconomic status populations has been an issue that healthcare has had to deal with for quite some time now. This is an issue that is of major concern to not only healthcare professionals but also to public health professionals because if there is a lack of disease immunity, which is the ultimate goal of a vaccine, without them there is a higher chance of occurrence and incidence of diseases that could easily be prevented by vaccinations. A comprehensive report issued by the Institute of Medicine in 2002, Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care, concluded that minority populations in the U.S. consistently suffer from disparities in healthcare. Adolescent and adult immunization is no exception. It is important to note that the rates for childhood vaccines are much higher than adolescent and adult vaccination rates and this is because, at least, for the United States, children need to be vaccinated and have a complete vaccination history done before they enter a school system. It is for this reason that childhood vaccinations rates are higher than those in other ages. While racial and ethnic disparities are a concern, childhood vaccine coverage in general is high—about 90% of children in the U.S. and Canada have received their recommended vaccinations. In comparison, national coverage rates in the U.S. for most vaccines targeted to adults are under 70%.

Some of the key factors that have contributed to lower vaccination rates among minorities and or populations of low socioeconomic status are:

- Lack of health insurance
  - Private insurance is unaffordable
  - Undocumented aliens
  - Employer does not provide health coverage
- Language barrier between a patient and healthcare provider
- Lack of knowledge about the benefits that a vaccine could provide
  - Uneducated
- Belief in rumors or folktales
  - Vaccines are not useful
  - Vaccines could be linked to autism or other neurological disorders
- Healthcare is not accessible
  - No healthcare facilities in close proximity
  - Many cannot take off work to get themselves vaccinated

Due to the strict regimen that children need to follow in order to have a complete vaccination record and the success that such rules have had on the rates amongst childhood vaccination rates, it is important to focus on vaccines that are “recommended” by healthcare professionals. Among these are the Influenza vaccine, Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine, and Pneumonia vaccine. Influenza (commonly called flu) and pneumonia are both vaccine-preventable diseases. Yet together they represented the seventh leading cause of death in the United States in 2003. Flu and pneumonia immunization rates ... among African Americans and Hispanics are substantially below those of their white counterparts. With regards to the HPV vaccines rates are still considered low not only because of how recent this vaccine but also because many people don’t realize the benefits, what it is preventing, how they can receive it, and if it is covered.
Immunization rates:

In 1796 a British scientist by the name of Edward Jenner stumbled upon what later became one of the greatest public health accomplishments in history, vaccinations. Since this landmark event, scientist have been able to develop vaccines for nearly every infectious disease including smallpox, polio, hepatitis as well as countless others. These seemingly miracle drugs allow the body to develop immunity to specific pathogens without suffering from their harmful side effects. For example, the smallpox vaccine contains a live, but weakened form of the smallpox virus. When it is introduced into the body via injection, the body can easily fight off the infection and will gain immunity towards any future encounters with the pathogen. Along with the ability to prevent individuals from transmitting harmful pathogens by vaccination, it also protects individuals who are not vaccinated. This concept is known as herd immunity, where once a population reaches a threshold percentage of individuals vaccinated, the entire population becomes immune to an epidemic of that disease. Due to the development of the vaccinations, millions of lives have been saved since those who receive these vaccines are now immune to the pathogen they are being vaccinated for.

However certain groups, particularly minority groups and those with low socioeconomic status, have disproportionately been under vaccinated. In 2010, the CDC published a report which calculated the influenza vaccination rates of specific demographics of people including age, location, and ethnicity. This report states that only 39.1% of African Americans and 36.8% of Hispanics over the age of 6 months received their influenza vaccination for that year compared to the white population which was at 45.0%.1 Other vaccines such as PPV (Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine) and the HPV (Human Papillomavirus) also have shown a similar trend. These differences in vaccination rates can be attributed to a wide range of factors due to a lifestyle difference. These factors may include lack of health insurance which is a major concern among lower socioeconomic status individuals since health care costs in the United States is the highest in price out of any other country, limited access to health care because many low income neighborhoods lack a clinic or hospital, a language barrier between minority groups and health care professionals which can easily cause miscommunication, lack of knowledge of vaccinations, as well as folktales and rumors of vaccinations such as their link to autism or other serious side effects. A combination of these factors may very well be the reasons for the health disparities seen among lower socioeconomic status individuals and minorities. If these problems were to be addressed and attempted to be resolved, the overall health of our population may drastically improve.

1 Centers for Disease Control Influenza Vaccination Rates (2010-2011)
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/report1011/reportII

Health Insurance:

If an individual had to pick one of the major problems with the United States as a whole, health care would definitely be near the top of the list. As of September 2010, there were over
50 million people in the United States that did not have health insurance, which is the most out of any developed country. The main reason for this monumental problem is privatization of insurance companies. Since insurance companies run as a business rather than a governmental program, insurance companies provide to only those who can afford the astronomical amount they charge for coverage. The government does however provide assistance through two programs; Medicare and Medicaid. Medicaid is a program that provides health assistance to adults or children who make 100% below the poverty line, which in New Jersey is approximately $33,000. For anyone with a family, they know this amount is barely enough to pay for basic necessities, yet along pay for health insurance. The second program, Medicare, is a system that provides assistance for all seniors over the age of 65.

Other than these two programs that only cover about less than 30% of the entire population, everyone else must find a private insurance provider. Besides the shear cost of insurance, there are a myriad of other reasons why lower socioeconomic groups, as well as minorities cannot obtain health insurance. Since many individuals included in these groups are undocumented aliens, they are unable to apply for any form of insurance programs due to their legal status although some do qualify for one of the governmental programs. This population consists of roughly just under 4.0% of the total United States population, which equates to approximately 11 million people. There is also a large majority of individuals who are not receiving health care through their employer. For example, more than half of United States citizens who have health insurance receive it through their employer. As for everyone else, they must obtain health insurance on their own and pay for any cost in full by themselves. This is in part because of the price of insurance. Due to the high expense of health insurance has on companies many opt to not offer it as part of the benefits to their employees.

*L Medicaid Qualifications
http://healthinsuranceinfo.net/getinsured/new-jersey/financial-assistance/medicaid/

*2 Percentage of undocumented aliens

Lack of Knowledge of Vaccines:

(HH) One of the biggest reasons vaccinations rates are low in populations of low socioeconomic status is the general, “I didn't know” excuse. Vaccinations are not prioritized enough. Doctor visits are now done only after someone is sick. There is rarely a time when someone visits a doctor or calls a clinic just for information on vaccines. Most doctors treat their each patient for a specific complaint or illness but don't usually recommend vaccinations at the end of appointments. People need to ask questions when they are uncertain things they don't fully understand, instead of just assuming that the doctor must know what the patient is doing. In 2003 research studies showed that one out of every five patients who died in medical intensive care units at one of the nation's best hospitals were misdiagnosed by their doctors - a rate that mirrors the rates found in ICU's [intensive care units] nationwide. In 2005 it was shown that most misdiagnoses resulted from premature closure; when doctors jump to conclusions too quickly, and don't consider all the possibilities that would lead to correct answers. Doctors could make mistakes as well, because they’re only human. Due to the norm in our society that those who are good patients just listen to their doctors and those who ask questions and argue with their doctors are seen as bad patients, is another reason why people shy back from asking
too many questions. Many individuals don’t know that vaccinations are not just to protect themselves, but also to stop the spread of diseases throughout the population.

Many don't have the time and resources to look up information in order to inform themselves and adequately decide to whether they think it’s important enough or getting vaccines are not their primary concerns. Unfortunately, the U.S. doesn’t do an adequate job at informing the public about the benefits of vaccines, who is ideal for each type of vaccination, what is the cost of each vaccine, etc. If the United States informed its communities about the importance of receiving vaccines now only would rates be much higher but we would also see a lower incidence of many diseases.

If people get vaccinated, more money would be saved from simple yearly cold medications or treatments provided by hospitals in order to treat diseases that could have otherwise been prevented by vaccines. Unfortunately, getting vaccinated is one of people’s less concerns. Many have the idea of “optimistic bias”, the thought that “it's not going to happen to me”. There is always that risk that people tend to over look when they can easily just lessen the fear and possibility of getting the disease by getting vaccinated.

* [http://patients.about.com/od/misdiagnosis/a/defmisdiagnosis.htm](http://patients.about.com/od/misdiagnosis/a/defmisdiagnosis.htm)

**Language Barrier:**

(HH) The United States is a very diverse country. The majority of people in low socioeconomic status are minorities and immigrants whose first language is not English. “In the 2009 Census Bureau, New Jersey's American Community Survey shows that 19.7% of New Jersey's population is shown to be foreign born, and 27.6% of New Jersey speak a language other than English and 11.7% of that population speak English less than very well. Of that population, Spanish is the largest speaking population, 6.6% who speak English less than very well.”

Just looking at the percentages, the numbers seem small, but by looking at the actual numbers 11.7% equates to 942,997 people, while 794,331 people of America live with incomes earning less than $35,000. There is obviously a giant language barrier in New Jersey and translation is definitely a necessity to increase immunization in minorities.

In NJ populations, people don’t understand doctors due to their larger vocabulary and possible language barrier. This misunderstanding of jargons is not only a problem for minorities and immigrants, but for many people who simply never took a biology or medical course in college, or is just not familiar with such terminologies. If a person understands what a vaccine contains, why it is important to obtain it and what the consequences are of not receiving it, they are most likely to accept when vaccines receiving recommended vaccines or asking further questions to know if a vaccine is ideal to them. However, due to such miscommunication to many it is just a painful shot. No one likes to hurt themselves or waste their time waiting for an appointment or to be seen at a clinic without the full understanding of why they are going through the pain.
“In the 1996 Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, the top reasons for why adults had not received pneumococcal or influenza vaccines were lack of knowledge that the vaccines were recommended and concerns about safety.” Language barriers aren’t just a problem of communication from doctor to patient, but also vice versa. There could be questions that patients would like to ask their doctors or specialists and not be able to know how to say it, or translate it. Because doctors can't fully interpret what they want to say or double-check with the patient what kind of symptoms he or she is describing and experiencing. This lack of communication and exchange of information can lead to misdiagnosing and other related problems.

Folktales and Rumors:

Vaccination rates amongst minorities and populations of low socioeconomic status have been significantly dropping in recent years while acute infectious diseases have been reemerging and chronic infectious diseases keep rising. A large portion of these events are due to folktales and rumors that many cultures share about vaccinations. One of the most common examples is that vaccines have an association or cause autism and other neurological disorders. However, there has yet to be any proof that vaccinations lead to autism.

Rumors usually begin by someone who is seen as an expert and describes the “bad and harmful” effects that vaccines can cause; it sends people into a frenzy. For example, take the way Michele Bachmann and her attack towards the HPV vaccine on September 23, 2011. “… [I was told] that her little daughter took that vaccine, that injection, and she suffered from mental retardation thereafter... There is no second chance for these little girls if there is any dangerous consequences to their bodies, ’Bachmann said.’ Without any supporting facts or evidence, and just by word of mouth, Bachmann tells the public to stay away from getting HPV vaccinations. “Congresswoman Bachmann's decision to spread fear of vaccines is dangerous and irresponsible,’ said Evan Siegfried, a spokesman for the Global and Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership. ‘There is zero credible scientific evidence that vaccines cause mental retardation or autism. She should cease trying to foment fear in order to advance her political agenda.’”

Because people in low socioeconomic status don't have many resources to find information about vaccines, they receive a lot of information by word of mouth and the media. These rumors can greatly affect people deterring away from receiving vaccinations. Recent studies show that “public programs that provide vaccines at low cost or no charge at all, have helped influence families in the low economic status get their vaccinations, while the wealthy parents fear that the rumors are true.”


Pneumococcal Pneumonia:

(Pneumococcal disease, also known as Pneumonia, is an infection that is caused by bacteria *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. Pneumonia is mostly perceived by the public as a respiratory disease; however, the bacteria that can cause infection can attack other parts of the body making this a much more serious and severe disease. When the bacterium invades the lungs it can cause the most common kind of bacterial pneumonia. When the same bacteria enter the blood, they cause an infection called bacteremia. In the brain, they cause meningitis. Pneumococcal pneumonia is a serious illness that kills thousands of older people in the United States each year. It is important that individuals receive this vaccine because those that do get the vaccine will be protected against almost all of the bacteria that can cause pneumococcal pneumonia and other pneumococcal diseases as well.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, everyone age 65 and older should get the pneumonia vaccine. Some younger people should get it also. Ask a doctor for the vaccine if you:

- Are age 65 or older.
- Have a chronic illness, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes.
- Have a weak immune system. (This can be caused by certain kidney diseases, some cancers, HIV infections organ transplant medicines, and other disease.)

It is also recommended that children of all ages receive the vaccine as well. A healthcare provider at a clinic, hospital or doctor’s office can administer Pneumococcal pneumonia vaccines. For patients who are enrolled in the Medicare Program, it will cover the pneumococcal vaccine for individuals’ age 65 and older. Medicare can pay for both the cost of the vaccines and their administration by recognized providers. Once five years have elapsed since the initial pneumococcal vaccine, a booster vaccine is covered for persons in high risk categories. From the perspective of a public health professional it is important that individuals get vaccinated against pneumonia because it can be transmitted through coughing and sneezing which can expose many people especially if living in smaller spaces.

*Text in italics is directly taken from [http://www.fbhe.org/Patients/Modules/pneumonia.cfm#side](http://www.fbhe.org/Patients/Modules/pneumonia.cfm#side)
*Text in italics is directly taken from [http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/health/ib83_disparities.pdf](http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/health/ib83_disparities.pdf)
[http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pneumo/in-short-both.html#who](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pneumo/in-short-both.html#who)

Human Papillomavirus (HPV):

(HPV)

What is Human Papillomavirus?

“*Human Papillomavirus or HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STI). HPV consists of more than 150 different viruses, more than 40 of which is*
HPV is also associated with some cancers. Most people are only familiar with HPV as the cause of female cervical cancer. What many people don't know is that HPV can also be transmitted to males as well. “HPV is the most prevalent cause for cervical cancer; but they are also associated with cancer of the oropharynx (throat and tongue), vulva, vagina, penis, and anal.” It is true that cervical cancer is the most common HPV associated cancer, “nearly 12000 women develop cervical cancer each year worldwide.” However, studies have shown that “about 95% of anal cancers, 65% of vaginal cancers, and 60% of oropharyngeal cancers are linked to HPV,” but these cancers are hardly ever mentioned to be linked with HPV. It is important to know and understand the many health damages that HPV can cause. Increasing knowledge among individuals and communities about the disease will increase people’s beliefs of how important receiving the vaccine really is.

Symptoms?

The scariest fact about HPV is that many of the viruses that occur don't come with any symptoms. “Some of the HPV viruses show genital warts, and some change peoples body cells into abnormal cells which in time can become cancerous.” It is said that “about 90% of HPV cases are cleared up by our immune system, within 2 years.” But even then, without any symptoms infected individuals would be spreading it to their sexual partner without any knowledge.

Who are at risk of getting HPV?

Both men and women of all ages who are sexually active are at risk of acquiring HPV. Even with a condom HPV could be transmitted from areas that condoms cannot cover. “Pregnant women with HPV can also pass HPV to her baby during delivery and cause the baby to have severe respiratory problems called RRP/JORRP, which will lead to death of the baby.”

Vaccinations!!!

HPV is one of the sneakiest viruses out there and also the most common STI. It is unlikely that many people don't receive regular checkups about their partner's sexual health before any sexual contact. This is why getting HPV vaccines would avoid individuals from getting the infections without their knowledge.

This applies mostly to people who have a low socioeconomic status and minorities. Visits to doctors just for regular checkups are a lot of money and time spent. Additionally, many hardly go to the doctor to be seen for acute infectious diseases. Most are not willing to spend money and time in order to receive a vaccine for a disease they don’t even know if they have yet or if they think it could easily be treated with over the counter drugs. Vaccines are to prevent future infections, not to cure infections that are already present. Therefore, it is important to let people know that they should get the vaccine in order to prevent contraction of HPV and develop HPV related diseases in the future. Like the other vaccinations mentioned in this paper, HPV vaccinations are only recommended, and people tend to overlook the importance of them.

There are two types of vaccinations for HPV that are given in series of three injections over a 6 month period into muscle tissue; Gardasil and Cervarix. “Gardasil protects against four HPV types: 6, 11, 16, and 18, and it is recommended for both men and women ages 9-26."
Cervarix only targets two HPV types: 16 and 18, and it is recommended only to women ages 10-25. Cervarix is primarily for the prevention of cervical cancer, while Gardasil gives protection from genital warts and cervical, anal, vulvar, and vaginal cancer.”  

The price of these vaccinations at clinics can come out to be more than $130 per dose plus staff time, equipment, and other fees. “There are many clinics that have “sliding-scale fees” that set the cost according to a person's level of income/insurance coverage.”  

Families that are Medicaid eligible are covered to receive HPV vaccinations and other immunizations. However, as previously mentioned in this paper, there are many families in New Brunswick, NJ and other predominantly low income neighborhoods that are not eligible for Medicaid but at the same time don't have enough income to pay for private insurance or are too old to qualify for a children program. The company of Cervarix (GSK) and Gardasil (Merck) offers free vaccinations to people in that category.

* http://www.cdc.gov/hpv/  

Influenza:

(JS) Influenza, also known as the flu, is an infectious respiratory disease caused by the influenza virus. Like many communicable diseases the virus is spread via droplet spray from a cough, sneeze or even talking. The incubation period of influenza is approximately 5-7 days before symptoms emerge. Symptoms generally range from mild to severe, in extreme cases it can include headache, vomiting, fatigue, and sometimes a fatal fever. Historically, influenza has been a consistent plague on humanity, reemerging every year during the fall and winter seasons. On average approximately 40,000 individuals die in the United States each year along with thousands of other who become ill. Because of the severity of this problem, all individuals should receive their seasonal influenza vaccination, especially though in high risk groups which include:

- **Children under the age of 5**
- **Adults over the age of 65**
- **Pregnant women**
- **Individuals with chronic conditions (including but not limited to, Asthma, heart disease, liver disorders, a weakened immune system, etc.)**

Everyone should receive their seasonal influenza vaccine in order to prevent not only themselves from becoming ill, but to prevent other from contracting the disease from them. This vaccine is available at any major health care facility as well as other local pharmacies including Rite Aid, Walgreens, and CVS and is covered in full by many health insurance providers.

*1 High risk groups for influenza http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm#whois
Service Project – Raising vaccination and healthcare awareness in the New Brunswick, NJ Community

It is our purpose to inform the population of New Brunswick, NJ about the different healthcare facilities they can attend in order to not only receive vaccinations but also quality healthcare. In order to raise awareness about vaccines and healthcare we designed a pamphlet that contained information on three “suggested” or “recommended” vaccines. Due to the lack of information and the importance of receiving these specific vaccines we focused on; Influenza, HPV and Pneumonia. Under each vaccine it contained a short description of what the disease is, the benefit to receiving the vaccines, who is supposed to or encouraged to receive the vaccine, where the vaccine can be administered and cost of the vaccine. In order to reach the population of New Brunswick, NJ we distributed these pamphlets in key locations in New Brunswick, NJ that we felt would be mostly visited by adults, adolescents and children and advertisement boards on the busy parts of George Street. We also distributed these at the New Brunswick’s food pantry, Hope Manor, a housing community located along George Street, where many of the residents are either from a low socioeconomic status and African Americans and or Hispanics. These pamphlets where placed on individual’s door handles. Although we were not able to obtain positive outcomes, we contacted the Women, Infants and Children program in New Brunswick, NJ to distribute our pamphlets but were unsuccessful at doing so due to program’s restrictions. We also spoke and try to receive help to raise awareness through the Rutgers Health Clinics but were unsuccessful at this too. Finally, we were able to distribute our pamphlets at Elijah Promise Soup Kitchen, where a large portion of the underserved community of New Brunswick, NJ is fed. We felt as though our informational pamphlets would be of great help to inform and educate individuals about the resources available in their community. Due to the diverse population of New Brunswick, NJ the pamphlets will be available in both Spanish and English in order to reach and inform as many people as possible.

References

9. http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000US34&-qr_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_DP5YR2&-ds_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on,
10. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0689/is_1_54/ai_n8705013/


Contacts:

(LR/HH)

- Shoprite provides Flu vaccines for $30.00, however, if costumer has a Shoprite Plus Card he or she could receive $10.00 off
- Riteaid is also providing Flu vaccines for $27.99 and Pneumococcal Pneumonia
- Walmart is providing Flu vaccines for $25.00 and Pneumococcal Pneumonia
- GSK will provide free immunizations for Cervarix to women ages 19-25, who do not have insurance, and low income.
  - GSK- GlaxoSmithKline
    Phone: 1-877-822-2911
- Merck offers free Gardasil vaccinations to people over age 19 who do not have health insurance or cannot afford to pay for the vaccine.
  - Merck & Co., Inc.
    Phone: 1-800-293-3881
- UMDNJ Eric B. Chandler will provide immunizations to patients who want to pay for the vaccine or those covered by Medicaid, Medicare or Charity care
  - Eric B. Chandler Health Center
    277 George Street
    New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Letters to the Editor:

El Especialito Newspaper (Local Spanish Newspaper)

(LR)

Title: The Lack of Vaccination Rates and Healthcare Amongst Low Socioeconomic Populations

Recently we have been experiencing a trend that shows low vaccination rates amongst individuals of low socioeconomic status and in minority populations. Unfortunately, this has been an issue that healthcare has had to deal with for quite sometime now. It is important to recognize this, as an issue because many health care and public health professionals see this as a lack of disease protection, which is the ultimate goal of a vaccine. There is a higher chance of occurrence and incidence of diseases that could easily be prevented by vaccinations. Some possible reasons that might deter individuals from seeking health care or vaccinations are the lack of health insurance, the language barrier between the patient and the healthcare provider, lack of knowledge about the benefits that a vaccine could provide, many cultures believe in rumors or folktales about the effects of vaccines and many times healthcare is not accessible in many communities. It has also been noticed that vaccines that have the lowest record are those that are “recommended” by a physician. Among these is the Influenza vaccine, Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine, and Pneumonia vaccine. Influenza (commonly called flu) and pneumonia are both vaccine-preventable diseases. These vaccines are amongst the vaccines with lowest rates because they are either recommended, too expensive if the person lacks health insurance or the physician doesn’t stress enough the importance of receiving them. Also it has been observed that vaccines that require coming back for multiple doses also cause individuals not to receive them. Therefore, it is important to inform individuals of the benefits of receiving vaccines in general. Allow them to be informed of other health care services available in their communities that might be of low cost to them or government funded healthcare that they might be eligible for. It is crucial to stress the importance of receiving healthcare and keeping up with routine vaccines in order to better the health of individuals and reduce future illnesses. In order to bridge the gap between healthcare and individuals of low socioeconomic status and minorities communities need to be informed and encouraged to receive beneficial vaccinations.

*Because the local newspaper is in the Spanish language this letter to the editor was sent to them in Spanish as well.

Home News Tribune and MyCentralJersey.com

(HH)

Title: Winter is coming! Winter is coming! Guard yourselves and Arm yourselves! Cause winter is coming!
Winter is on its way and with global warming there are drastic weather changes happening already in November; one day 30 degrees and chilly with snow in the middle of October and the next day 60 degrees. With this crazy weather pattern we are more prone to getting sick with the flu or the common cold. Are you tired your throat feeling like sand paper, your head feeling like a bull dozer just ran over it and wanting to chop off your stuffy congested nose? Well, you can avoid getting the most severe cases by getting seasonal flu shot vaccines. There are so many vaccines out there that are recommended by doctors, like the flu shot vaccine (or Influenza vaccine), Human Papillomavirus vaccine (or HPV vaccine), and the Pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine that people ignore getting.

With the high costs of health insurance many of the vaccines are too expensive for a lot of people to afford. But there are now many programs that people can get financial help from to get these vaccines for low costs or even for free. If people can afford it, they don’t see the importance in having to get one. Along with these issues there are many rumors that go around about vaccines, and the lack of knowledge about the vaccines that prevent people from getting the protection they need. There is a much higher concern for the community who cannot understand English very well. While these rumors spread and they don’t fully understand the importance of getting vaccinated, they have this language barrier that prevents them from learning more or the truth about vaccines.

Most people know that getting vaccinated will protect them from getting infected by a certain disease, but most of them don’t know that it is also protecting the infections from spreading. If enough people get vaccinated, even the small amount of people who can’t afford to get vaccinated or was never informed about vaccinations can be protected. Surrounding the community of people who don’t have the vaccine, with as many of the people who are protected against the infection with vaccines, it will create a less probability of spreading the infection.

Most of the vaccines only prevent infections; they don’t get rid of existing infections or diseases. The next time you see a sign at your local pharmacy, or see an opportunity to get vaccinated for a disease at a low cost, don’t just let it pass by you. You can be one of the “heroes” who stopped the spread of a serious disease.

**Star Ledger, must be under 200 words**

(JS)

Increasing vaccination has and continues to be one of the most important goals of the public health sector. Every year thousands of vaccine preventable diseases cases sporadically pop up around the country due to individuals who either refuse to get themselves or their children vaccinated, cannot afford the vaccinations, or those who simply don’t know what they are for. For the group who chooses not to be vaccinated, they are only depriving themselves and their children of a potential life saving injection because they genuinely believe that vaccinations are linked to autism despite the fact there has never been a study which has linked the two. Nothing short of a miracle will likely convince this group to vaccinate themselves, despite the obvious benefits they receive from obtaining them. Aside from this group, there are larger pro-vaccine groups also historically has been below average when it comes to being vaccinated;
Hispanics and African Americans. According to the Centers for Disease Control in 2010, only 39.1% of Hispanics and 36.8% of African Americans living in New Jersey were vaccinated for influenza. Whether it be because certain individuals cannot afford the vaccinations, cannot effectively communicate with health care professionals due to language barriers, or simply do not know about these vaccinations, this under par rate of vaccination cannot continue.