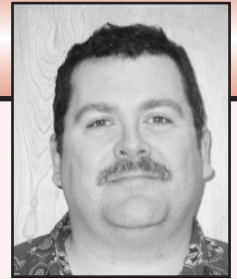


ASK A PRACTICE ADVISOR

by Greg Riehl, RN, Nursing Practice Advisor



PREVENTING INFLUENZA IS ONE WAY TO MAINTAIN PATIENT SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Who can give flu shots in Saskatchewan?

RNs are the key health professionals delivering vaccines in Saskatchewan including influenza immunization. RNs play a major role in program development and evaluation, quality control, competence of personnel, and vaccine handling, and as such must maintain competency in immunization best practices. Developing and implementing immunization programs require the depth and breadth of knowledge, skill and judgement of a RN.

Is a chart needed before a client can receive a flu vaccination? A chart or documentation is one of the considerations in influenza immunization programs. The RN must ensure the following four things when considering flu vaccinations:

- Informed consent has been obtained
- A prescription/directive from an appropriate professional is in place
- The RN has the knowledge and competence to deliver and manage the vaccine and potential complications and,
- Appropriate documentation.

The SRNA document on immunization (SRNA, 2003) addresses standards of practice for documentation. A chart may not always be needed in certain settings, however, a way to record the administration needs to be developed and utilized. This may be paper, electronic or a combination. Informed consent discusses the risks and benefits of the vaccination, alternatives and consequences of illness without vaccination. The consent can be written or verbal, but should be recorded as per the policy of the facility that describes the process.

Can RNs provide the flu shot in a pharmacy setting?

Yes, RNs are being asked to deliver immunization services outside of traditional health care facilities. This is related to public demand, new vaccines and target populations, and the changing demographics and care settings in Saskatchewan. Regardless of the setting, RNs must practice according to the SRNA documents: Guidelines for Immunization Administration & Immunization Programs (2003) and Medication Administration: Guidelines for Registered Nurses (2007).

Do I need certification to administer the flu vaccine?

Certification, required by some employers, is one way of ensuring that their RN employees are competent and current in providing immunization services.

Regardless of whether you have completed this certification, RNs must have the knowledge, skill and judgement to ensure the safe handling and storage and administration of the vaccine.

RNs must:

- Provide an appropriate and safe environment in which to administer the vaccine.
- Assess the appropriateness of the vaccine for the individual and understand the indications, contraindications, risks and expected outcomes of vaccination.
- Take appropriate action before, during and after the administration of the vaccine.
- Identify evolving negative outcomes, what intervention is required and how and when to report them.
- Utilize the resources necessary to intervene and manage the situation if anaphylaxis occurs.
- Document as required.

Should RNs receive the flu shot?

Yes, the SRNA encourages RNs to have the influenza vaccination and to review their immunization history to ensure that they maintain optimal health and are appropriately immunized.

Some employers may require that RNs be vaccinated and have policies that specifically refer to influenza and flu outbreaks. All RNs should be aware of their employer's policies, particularly to policies that give direction to staff members who are not immunized. The requirements for health care workers immunizations are normally established by individual workplaces, facilities, or legislation.

Resources:

Influenza - Saskatchewan Immunization Program
www.health.gov.sk.ca/influenza

Influenza Information for Schools and Parents
www.health.gov.sk.ca/influenza-schools-parents

Flu Watch Weekly Reports
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/08-09/index-eng.php

Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion
www.immunize.cpha.ca/en/default.aspx

References:

SRNA. 2007. Medication Administration: Guidelines for Registered Nurses. Regina: Author.

SRNA. 2005. Ask a practice advisor. Considerations for influenza and other immunization. Regina: Author.

SRNA. 2003. Guidelines for Immunization Administration & Immunization Programs. Regina: Author.

