

Perceptions of Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Counseling and Administration During Dental Visits

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Background: Children ages 6 months to 5 years old are at the highest risk of complications from seasonal influenza, particularly those living in poverty and those from racial and ethnic minority groups. Many children may not see their primary care providers during the influenza season, but routine dental visits may create an opportunity for influenza vaccination. Given the administration of vaccine's during dental visits is not currently standard, there is limited information on parents' perspectives on vaccination in the dental home.

Objective: To understand parents' perceptions of influenza vaccine counseling and administration during routine visits with an oral health provider at a federally qualified health center in Denver, CO.

Methods: We conducted a cross-sectional survey via convenience sampling of parents with children 18-months to 5-years old presenting for OHP visits between July 24th, 2023, and August 14th, 2023. Surveys were based on the health belief model and included validated questions about influenza vaccines and novel questions probing perceptions of dental visit counseling. Data was analyzed descriptively.

Results: The response rate was 95% (N = 289/303). Caregiver demographics included 61.5% English speaking and 38.5% Spanish speaking. The respective children were identified as 43% Caucasian, 19% African American, 5% Asian, 2% American Indian and 34% as other. 67% of Caregivers identified as Hispanic. 88% of Caregivers relied on Medicaid. Overall, 91.1% of parents reported feeling "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable" discussing influenza infection with their OHP. 88.1% of caregivers were similarly comfortable discussing the influenza vaccine with the dentist. Half (49.1%) of parents reported they "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" that they would trust their child's dentist to give them an influenza vaccine.

Conclusions: Most parents were amenable to influenza infection and vaccine counseling during dental visits. Half of parents surveyed strongly or somewhat agreed with vaccine delivery during dental visits. Future studies should evaluate the impact and feasibility of influenza vaccination during dental visits in underserved settings.