DIABETES MEDIA CAMPAIGN
GUIDE TO WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Working with the media can help you draw attention to the goal of your campaign—increasing awareness among people with diabetes about the importance of obtaining flu shots. Publicity can add to the success of your program and increase recognition of your organization.

Publicity also can extend the effect of your activities beyond the program itself. A special event, such as a flu prevention fair for people with diabetes, can be preceded and followed by publicity on the radio, in television announcements, and in the local newspaper. This helps get your message out to a larger audience.

If you have media relations experience, you already know how to effectively communicate your message to the media. If you have not worked with or have had limited experience with the media, there may be someone else in your organization familiar with media relations. If possible, find and work with this person or use the following guidelines to establish contacts and obtain coverage.

CONTACTING THE MEDIA

Major Market Media

You have received a list indicating which media outlets received the public service announcement (PSA) and media kit. You will need to contact the media representatives on this list to ensure that the issue receives the attention it deserves.

Public Service Directors

Public service directors for TV, radio, and print decide whether to run PSAs, and when and where to place them. Because they look to local organizations for ideas and support, your input will be essential. Call the public service director to make sure that the PSA and pitch letter was received. If it seems that your PSA is not a high priority, consider asking for an appointment (either telephone or face-to-face) to discuss why it is crucial to inform people with diabetes about the life saving potential of a flu shot and a pneumococcal vaccine, often referred to as a "pneumonia shot." Emphasize the value and importance of the campaign to the station's audience, and make recommendations about when the PSA should be placed based on the timing of campaign events in your state. Explain that the station's efforts on your behalf will be recognized and appreciated by public health officials and community leaders.

Television, Radio, and Print Medical and Health Editors

Following up via telephone to encourage editors to read and use the information in the media kit will give you an opportunity to establish yourself as a reliable source on diabetes issues. (If editors say they have not received the kit, offer to fax them the news release and put another kit in the mail.) Following up also provides you with an opportunity to explain the importance of the issue and find out whether they have questions, need more information, or want to arrange

interviews. Developing relationships with editors will increase the likelihood that the story will be presented accurately and consistently to the public.

Also, keep in mind that newspapers have more editors and reporters than television or radio stations and are considered the leading news-gathering force in a community. They are more likely to have the resources to cover your story. Radio and television will often follow a newspaper's lead in reporting news. So following up first with newspaper editors is a good start.

Local Media Outlets

Getting coverage of the issue via local media and local public service directors (TV, radio, newspapers, and magazines) will increase awareness of the issue at the community level, thereby broadening the audience reached by the campaign. The same strategies that you used when contacting major media markets can be used with local media. But first you need to find out who should receive your media materials. You are much more likely to get a response if you personalize the information, rather then sending it generically to "editor" or "producer." To find the names of contacts for your local media outlets you can check media directories, which are available at libraries. Positions at media outlets change frequently, so you may want to call to make sure the contact you received from the directory is still current.

In addition to contacting reporters and editors about stories, don't forget to send information on events or flu shot clinics to the calendar editor. You also can work with a local doctor to write a letter to the editor or short opinion piece about the importance of flu and pneumonia shots. These short pieces, called op-eds, run on the opinion page of the newspaper and are generally written by experts in the community. Contact your local opinion page editor for submission guidelines.

Also keep in mind that local media outlets may be interested in doing more than just providing publicity. Consider inviting a television or radio station, local cable network, or area newspaper to co-sponsor your event or activity.

Media Contacts

Television stations

- Health or medical reporter
- Physician/reporter
- Assignment editor in news department

Radio Stations

- Assignment editor
- News director

Local newspapers (weekly or daily)

- General assignment editor
- Health writer
- Lifestyle section editor
- Calendar section editor
- Editor of editorial page

Local or regional magazines

- Managing editor
- Health editor
- Calendar section

WHAT MAKES NEWS?

Story Angles

With your media list in hand, consider using the following story angles or "news hooks" to pique your contacts' interest in a story about the importance of a pneumococcal shot and an annual flu shot for people with diabetes. When pitching stories to different publications and programs, offer story angles that would be appropriate for their particular format and audience.

Here's how a verbal pitch for this story might sound: *"Hello, I am _____ with _____. I am calling to share some information with you about diabetes that can be very important, possibly even life saving, for your readers (or viewers or listeners). Did you know that people with diabetes are more likely to die with flu and pneumonia? I frequently read (or watch or listen to) your column (or program), and I thought you might be interested in doing a story on . . ."*

Use a story angle that would be appropriate for a specific audience. Here are a few ideas:

- ***Community events focusing on diabetes***. Health fairs, seminars, fundraising activities, flu shot clinics for people with diabetes, and other planned events designed to raise public awareness about diabetes should be promoted through the media. These events can provide the target audience with fun opportunities to learn about diabetes, the life saving potential of a flu and pneumonia shot for people with diabetes, and co-morbidity issues related to the condition.

- Ask newspapers to publish a list of locations where flu shots are available.

- ***Diabetes support groups***. A feature story can be developed about groups in your area formed to support those with diabetes (e.g., hospital support groups or the local American Diabetes Association chapter).

- ***Tips for managing diabetes***. Media stories can provide tips for managing diabetes including getting flu and pneumonia shots, diabetes self-management, reminders about how often to see a physician for preventive care, and local phone numbers to call for additional diabetes resources. Call your local chapter of the American Diabetes Association for more information.

- ***Worksite health promotion programs***. Stories about companies that provide diabetes education may be of interest to your media contacts. Identify and share with the media information about companies that provide educational seminars or other diabetes information.

- ***Profile a person with diabetes***. Work with your local hospital to find someone with diabetes who was hospitalized because of flu or pneumonia and is willing to "tell their story" and speak to the life saving potential of flu and pneumonia shots for people with diabetes. Supplement the profile with local statistics about diabetes and flu and pneumonia.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR OBTAINING MEDIA COVERAGE

Meet Face-to-Face

- Whenever you can, arrange to meet face-to-face with reporters, editors, and producers. Bring your article, news release, or other materials you want them to use. If you are asking them to cover an event, provide written background information.

- Emphasize the importance of promoting diabetes awareness throughout the community. If appropriate, you can use this opportunity to offer your services as an expert on diabetes who can be called upon in the future. If a story does appear, send a short note of thanks.

SPREADING THE NEWS

Give Interviews

Talk shows, call-in shows, and public affairs programs all provide publicity opportunities, often in the form of interviews. Newspaper and magazine editors also may be interested in interviewing a community leader or diabetes expert who can speak to the importance of flu shots, pneumococcal shots, and other preventive care for people with diabetes.

To arrange interviews:

- Choose a program or publication that reaches your target audience, such as a local television newscast, radio talk show, or newspaper.

- Send a letter to the producer or editor, explaining that you would like to talk about preventive care for people with diabetes and why an interview would be of interest to readers, viewers, or listeners.

An interview would be of interest to your audience because:

- Diabetes is an important public health issue affecting approximately 16 million people. (Add local statistics, if possible.)
- Individuals with diabetes are at increased risk for heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, lower extremity amputations, and complications with flu and pneumonia. They would benefit from information about preventive care related to the disease.
- Flu shots and the pneumococcal vaccine, which is known as a "pneumonia shot," have life saving potential for persons with diabetes. Each year, 10,000 to 30,000 people with diabetes die with flu and pneumonia, yet, only half of people with diabetes get a flu shot, and only a third have gotten a pneumococcal shot.

- Include briefing materials, including your credentials as an expert.

- Follow up the letter with a telephone call. For example, a follow-up call may sound like this: *"Hello, I am _____ with _____. I am calling to follow up on the letter I wrote you about a possible story on the increased risk of severe complications or even death with flu and pneumonia for people with diabetes. I would be able to assist you in developing the story, and I am available for interviews to help inform your audience of the importance of a pneumococcal shot and an annual flu shot to reduce the risks."*

- Prepare thoroughly for the interview, organizing your information and writing important points on note cards if necessary. Although the interviewer will have questions, you can keep key message points in mind and be prepared to make simple, direct, easy-to-understand statements that reflect your messages.

TALKING POINTS

The following talking points may be useful for interviews:

Quick Definition of Diabetes

- Diabetes is a disorder of metabolism—the way our bodies process and use certain foods, especially carbohydrates. The human body normally converts carbohydrates to glucose, the body's main source of fuel. To enter cells, glucose needs the help of insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas. People with diabetes do not produce enough insulin for the body to process glucose, so it builds up in the blood stream, overflows into the urine, and flows out of the body, depriving the body of its main source of fuel.

Diabetes in the United States

- Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States.
- There are an estimated 16 million cases of diabetes in the United States—only two-thirds were diagnosed with the condition.
- Treating the condition involves controlling blood glucose levels and working with a physician to monitor the diet, establish an exercise routine, and practice preventive care.

- The burden of diabetes is greater among certain minority groups (e.g., African Americans and Mexican Americans).
- Diabetes is costly to our nation—$98 billion in 1997.

Diabetes and Flu and Pneumonia

- Diabetes is a major risk factor for increased death and disease with flu and pneumonia.
- Persons with diabetes are about three times more likely than those without diabetes to die with complications of flu and pneumonia.
- Each year, 10,000 to 30,000 people with diabetes die with complications of flu and pneumonia.
- During flu epidemics, persons with diabetes are at increased risk for hospitalization with flu-related pneumonia.
- Only half of people with diabetes get a flu shot, and only a third have gotten a pneumococcal shot. (BRFSS, 1997)
- African Americans have flu immunizations rates half those of Caucasians.
- Getting a pneumococcal shot and an annual flu shot are preventive measures that people with diabetes can easily undertake. Flu shots are not costly, and services are usually available at clinics, pharmacies, and grocery stores before the winter flu season (generally November through March). People with diabetes should see their health provider about getting a pneumococcal vaccine.
- This campaign is an opportunity to put prevention into practice.

Diabetes Co-Morbidity

- Individuals with diabetes are at increased risk for heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, and lower extremity amputations.
- The good news about diabetes is that it can be managed with early detection, improved delivery of care, and diabetes self-management education.

TIPS FOR TELEVISION INTERVIEWS

To make the most of a television appearance, keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Avoid clothes with checks, stripes, and patterns. Medium-tone gray, blue, brown, or mixed colors are preferable.
- Avoid solid white blouses and shirts. Gray or light blue shades give the best effect.
- Avoid flashy accessories and jewelry that will catch the light. Don't wear glasses that turn dark in sunlight; they will darken under the strong TV lights.
- Resist the temptation to bend into the microphone; sit or stand up straight. Don't fold your arms.
- Keep your eyes on the interviewer. Do not look at the camera or studio monitor.
- Use natural gestures, but avoid rapid hand movements that are difficult for the camera to follow.
- Never assume you are off camera just because someone else is talking; you may still be in range.

Diabetes Media Campaign Sample Media Scenarios

Reporters' comments are in ***bold italics***, yours are in normal type.

#1 Television Interview

A reporter at one of your state's major television stations comes to your office to tape an interview for her weekly health feature. Use your interviewing skills to communicate the key messages in succinct "sound bites."

Tell me about the current campaign the state health department is conducting.

We're encouraging people with diabetes to get a flu shot before flu season begins. We are also encouraging them to get a pneumococcal vaccination, often known as a "pneumonia shot," if they have not already gotten one. People with diabetes are about 3 times more likely to die with the flu and pneumonia. These shots are safe, effective precautions.

Why are you doing this campaign?

Currently, 10,000 to 30,000 people with diabetes die each year with complications of flu and pneumonia. That number could be decreased if more people with diabetes got a flu and pneumonia shot. Yet, only half of them get an annual flu shot, and only a third have gotten a pneumococcal shot.

What happens to people with diabetes who get the flu or pneumonia?

Having a chronic condition such as diabetes weakens one's immune system, so people with diabetes are more susceptible to severe cases or complications with flu and pneumonia.

How many people with diabetes don't get flu or pneumonia shots?

According to our most recent national statistics, half of people with diabetes get an annual flu shot, and only a third have gotten a pneumonia shot.

Why don't people with diabetes get flu or pneumonia shots?

Most likely, people with diabetes don't get flu or pneumonia shots because they don't know of the importance; they don't think they are at risk because they may be young and/or they feel relatively healthy, although they have been diagnosed with diabetes. In addition, they may be afraid the shots themselves will give them the flu or pneumonia. Finally, it may be that they don't know where to get the shots, or don't know that the shots can be covered by insurance or are even free in some areas. We're working with the CDC this fall to get the message out to people with diabetes, their families and their doctors that pneumococcal shots and flu shots are simple, safe, life-saving measures.

Is it dangerous for people with diabetes to get flu or pneumonia shots?

Flu and pneumonia shots are safe; you cannot get the flu from the flu shot or pneumonia from the pneumonia shot. For most people with diabetes, getting the diseases is much more dangerous than getting the shots. The viruses in the flu vaccine are killed, so you cannot get the flu from the vaccine. In addition, the bacteria in the pneumonia shot are also killed, so you cannot get pneumonia from the pneumonia shot. People should talk with their doctor before getting the flu shot if they:

1) ever had a serious allergic reaction to eggs or a previous dose of flu vaccine, or
2) have a history of Guillaim-Barré Syndrome (GBS)

People should talk with their doctor about the pneumonia shot to see if they need a first or second dose.

Doesn't the flu shot sometimes cause the flu?

No. The flu vaccine does not contain a live virus, so it cannot cause the flu. The same is true for the pneumonia shot. (If probed: Sometimes people coincidentally catch a cold shortly after getting a flu shot, but it is unrelated to the shot. A cold is not the flu.)

Who should get a pneumonia shot?

We recommend that you speak with your health care provider about getting a pneumonia shot. Generally, a pneumonia shot is recommended for anyone aged two or older who, because of chronic health problems or age, has a greater chance of getting and dying with pneumonia. This includes people with diabetes who are at greater risk of dying with pneumonia.

Does the pneumonia shot protect people from all types of pneumonia?

The pneumonia shot protects people from pneumococcal (new-mo-Koc-kal) pneumonia, the most common form of severe pneumonia. It also protects them against other illnesses caused by the pneumococcal bacteria, such as bacterial meningitis and bacteremia.

Can people get the flu or pneumonia even if they get a shot?

Some people may catch the flu or get pneumonia despite vaccination. But even if they do, they are more likely to have a milder case, which will help reduce the risk of having to go to the hospital or even dying.

How often do people need a flu and pneumonia shot?

People need a flu shot every year, before flu season begins. Flu viruses change every year, and new vaccines are designed each year to accommodate these changes. One pneumonia shot, however, provides lasting protection for most people. People under 65 who have a chronic illness or a weakened immune system should ask their doctor about getting another shot five to ten years after their first one.

#2 Newspaper Pitch

You're calling the newspaper's health reporter to encourage him to do a story on the need for people with diabetes to get flu and pneumonia shots. He is reluctant to do any more flu stories this season. How will you convince him that this is a new angle that deserves coverage?

After introducing yourself, explaining that the reporter should have received a media kit on diabetes and the flu, and asking the reporter if he has a few minutes to talk, you say:

People with diabetes are about 3 times more likely to die with the flu and pneumonia. They can protect themselves with two safe, effective shots, yet only half of people with diabetes get vaccinated against the flu, and only a third have gotten vaccinated for pneumococcal pneumonia.

We've already done several stories about flu season. I don't think we'll do anything else on the topic.

Unless you've done a story specifically on the need for people with diabetes to get a flu and pneumonia shot, this topic deserves another look. There are xxx,xxx people in our state living with diabetes. And national estimates indicate that that number may actually be higher—a third of people with diabetes are undiagnosed. A story on this issue could save thousands of lives this flu season.

I heard flu season wasn't so bad this year. Can people skip the shot?

No. The flu strain changes every year, and the vaccination is adjusted to be effective against the current flu. More importantly, though, there is no such thing as a "mild" flu season for people with diabetes. If they catch the flu, they are more likely to become very sick, be hospitalized or even die. It is crucial that people with diabetes get a flu shot every year.

Don't people with diabetes have more important health concerns than the flu and pneumonia?

People with diabetes need to monitor their blood glucose, watch their diet, exercise and see their doctor regularly. Adding an annual flu shot and pneumonia shot to that routine gives them one more way to stay in control of their diabetes. These preventative measures are too easy to pass up.

How many people in our area with diabetes die as a result of the flu and pneumonia each year?

(Check this statistic ahead of time and have it on hand to show the local relevance. If it is not available, say that nationally, 10,000 to 30,000 people die annually with flu and pneumonia. Death rates among people with diabetes increase 5 to 15 percent during a flu epidemic.)

Do people with diabetes need a different kind of flu shot than other people? Can they get sick from the shot?

People with diabetes can get the same flu and pneumococcal vaccines as everyone else. They should check with their doctor, health care provider or immunization nurse, however, before being vaccinated in case they have certain allergies that are affected by flu shots, and to find out if they need a first or second pneumonia shot. The flu and pneumonia vaccines do not contain live viruses, so they cannot cause the flu or pneumonia. I can provide locations of clinics in the area that are offering flu shot clinics.

Please re-send me the information and include the names of some clinics. We'll consider the story.

Thank you. This story would be important not only for your readers with diabetes, but also for their family members and doctors. I'll check back with you tomorrow to see if you need more information or want to arrange an interview.

#3 Radio Remote

Your local radio station is doing a live remote from your diabetes health fair. You find a quiet place where you are not likely to be interrupted, and sit down with the reporter.

Tell me about why you are doing this health fair.

People with diabetes are about 3 times more likely to die with the flu and pneumonia. In fact, 10,000 to 30,000 people die each year with complications of the flu and pneumonia. If we can encourage more people with diabetes to get flu shots and see their health provider about getting a pneumococcal vaccine, we can greatly decrease that number. We're hosting this fair to provide flu shots to people with diabetes.

Why are flu and pneumonia so dangerous for people with diabetes?

People with diabetes have a weakened immune system that makes them more susceptible to develop severe cases of flu and pneumonia. A safe, preventive pneumonia shot and an annual flu shot are your best defenses. Even if people catch the flu or pneumonia after getting vaccinated, the vaccine will help prevent lower respiratory tract involvement and other secondary complications, which reduce the risk of hospitalization and death.

If the flu and pneumonia are so dangerous, wouldn't getting a flu shot or pneumonia shot be just as dangerous? Can you catch the flu or pneumonia from the shot?

No. Flu and pneumonia shots are safe; you cannot get the flu from the flu shot or pneumonia from the pneumonia shot. For most people with diabetes, getting the diseases is much more dangerous than getting the shots. The viruses in the flu vaccine are killed, so you cannot get the flu from the vaccine. In addition, the bacteria in the pneumonia shot are also killed, so you cannot get pneumonia from the pneumonia shot. People should talk with their doctor before getting the flu shot if they:

1) ever had a serious allergic reaction to eggs or a previous dose of flu vaccine, or
2) have a history of Guillaim-Barré Syndrome (GBS)

People should talk with their doctor about the pneumonia shot to see if they need a first or second dose.

Should anyone not get a flu or a pneumonia shot?

Everyone should talk with their doctor before getting any vaccination, as there are some people who should not be vaccinated. People with egg allergies or a history of Gullaim Barré Syndrome (GBS) should only get the flu shot under their doctor's specific recommendation.

Are people who got a flu shot last year covered for this year?

No. Flu viruses change every year, and vaccines are designed to accommodate these changes. It's important to get a flu shot every year before flu season begins in the fall.

How is a pneumonia shot different from a flu shot?

The pneumococcal shot, often known as the pneumonia shot, is a vaccine recommended for anyone aged two or older who, because of a chronic health problem or age, has a greater chance of getting and dying with pneumonia. For most people, one shot provides protection for a lifetime. People at risk should talk to their health provider about getting a pneumonia shot.

How can people with diabetes get a flu shot?

They can come to the fair (give place, times, dates), or check with their doctor. Flu shots are given at most health care providers' offices. They're fast and inexpensive—in fact, they're covered by Medicare, Part B.

Thanks for being here today.

Thanks for coming.

#4 Voicemail

You call a television assignment editor to suggest that the station use your flu shot clinic as the opportunity to produce a story on the need for people with diabetes to get a pneumococcal shot and an annual flu shot. You get voicemail, and now have about 30 seconds to convince them to call you back and do a story.

Try some different approaches:

Hello, this is (name) from (organization). My number is (###-####). No one wants to get sick this flu season, and a flu shot is the best defense. But for some people, the flu or pneumonia can be more than an inconvenience—it can be a death sentence. People with diabetes are about 3

times more likely to die with flu and pneumonia. A pneumococcal shot and an annual flu shot can be their life preservers. I hope you'll consider a story encouraging people with diabetes to take these safe, easy precautions this flu season. Our flu shot clinic, which starts Monday, provides a timely hook for the story. Please call me at ###-#### for more information or an interview.

Hello, this is (name) from (organization). My number is (###-####). We recently sent you some information on the importance of flu and pneumonia shots for people with diabetes, who are about 3 times more likely to die with flu and pneumonia. I hope you'll consider a story on this important issue. Your help can save thousands of lives. Our flu shot clinic, which starts Monday, will provide good visuals for the story. Please call me at ###-#### for more information or an interview.

Hello, this is (name) from (organization). My number is (###-####). Did you know that 10,000 to 30,000 people with diabetes die each year with complications of flu and pneumonia? Those numbers could be greatly reduced if people with diabetes got a pneumococcal shot and an annual flu shot. Yet, only half of them get an annual flu shot, and only a third have gotten a pneumonia shot. We're conducting a flu shot clinic beginning this Monday to encourage people with diabetes to get vaccinated for the flu and to talk to their health provider about getting a pneumonia shot. A story on this issue could save thousands of lives. Please call me at ###-#### for more information or an interview.

Hello, this is (name) from (organization). My number is (###-####). Deaths among people with diabetes increase 5 to 15 percent during a flu epidemic. A pneumonia shot and an annual flu shot could be lifesavers for people with diabetes. Yet, only half of them get an annual flu shot, and only a third have gotten a pneumonia shot. A story on this topic would interest your viewers with diabetes, as well as their families and physicians. Our flu shot clinic, which begins this Monday, provides a timely hook for the story. Please call me at ###-#### for more information or an interview.

#5 Television Public Service Director

You call a television public service director to encourage him/her to use the PSA. He/She says the station already is running a flu shot PSA by another health organization. Your challenge is to convince him/her that there is room for more than one flu message.

After introducing yourself, you say:

We sent you a tape and storyboard for a PSA urging people with diabetes to get a flu shot. Have you had a chance to review it?

No, but we're already running a PSA on flu shots, and one on the National Diabetes Education Program. We don't have much available time, so we can't run three PSAs on the same topic.

It's great that you're running a spot on flu shots and one on the National Diabetes Education Program, but I encourage you to rotate the three spots. A general flu spot won't point out the added need for people with diabetes to get a flu shot, when the truth is that they are about 3 times more likely to die with flu. Yet, only half of them get an annual flu shot. And the NDEP spot is about living well with diabetes in general, a message which is strengthened by the specific action—getting a flu shot—this spot delivers. Would you consider alternating the three spots?

People with diabetes will get the message from the general spot.

Yes, but they may not realize that they're at increased risk of dying with the flu. People with diabetes tend to take better care of themselves, so it's a bit odd that only half of them get an annual flu shot. Chances are, they don't know how much they need them.

What does the spot look like?

You'll find a photoboard inside the packet with stills from the shoot. It's professionally produced in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the state health department. It uses the visual metaphor of a life preserver, since that's what a flu shot is for a person with diabetes. It includes a specific call to action—getting a flu shot.

I'll take a look and see if we can fit it in.

Thanks. Running this spot could save thousands of lives, and would be important for your viewers with diabetes, as well as their families and physicians.

#6 Radio PSA Director

You call a radio public service director to encourage him/her to run the spot, and to ask that on-air personalities announce times and dates for a flu clinic after the spot airs.

After introducing yourself, you say:

We sent you a tape of a PSA urging people with diabetes to get a flu shot. Have you had a chance to review it?

No. Tell me a little more about the message.

People with diabetes are about 3 times more likely to die with the flu and pneumonia. In fact, 10,000 to 30,000 people with diabetes die each year with complications of flu or pneumonia. The PSA encourages people with diabetes to talk to their doctor about getting an annual flu shot. Running the spot could save thousands of lives.

But people with diabetes are a small percentage of the population. Our spots have to serve the general public.

There are xxx,xxx people in our state with diabetes. And national estimates indicate that this number may actually be higher, since a third of people with diabetes don't even know that they have diabetes. Running this PSA could save thousands of lives this flu season. It is important information not only for people with diabetes, but also for their families and physicians.

We get stacks of tapes every day, so it's difficult to say what will make it on the air. But I'll take a look.

Great. To give the spots more local impact, I could provide a local number for people to call for more information, a list of places in the community where people can get flu shots, and statistics on the number of people with diabetes in the state. Your on-air personalities could read this information after the spots air.

Please send me that information and I'll listen to the tape.

Thank you. I'll call back in a few days to see what you decided.

Note: You can adapt this sample press release to fit your specific event or program.

For Immediate Release
(Date)

Contact: (your name)
(telephone number)

Flu Prevention Fair for People With Diabetes Set for XXXX 1999

(your town, your State)—The (name of State) Diabetes Control Program, in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is sponsoring an influenza (flu) prevention fair on (dates) from (start time) to (end time) at (locations) to promote the life saving potential of flu and pneumonia shots for people with diabetes. (Optional if locations have not been determined at time of release: Locations will be announced in [name of newspaper] and on [name of radio station].)

Health care providers will administer flu shots to people with diabetes at no cost and discuss the benefits of preventive care for people with diabetes. Interested participants should consult their physician before receiving any vaccine; some people should not be vaccinated. (name of store) will provide free refreshments during the event.

“The purpose of the event is to show individuals with diabetes how easy it is to practice preventive care to better manage their disease,” explained (name), spokesperson for (your organization). "The fact is, people with diabetes are about three times more likely to die with complications of flu and pneumonia. By providing flu shots, information, and health education to people with diabetes, we hope to reduce those numbers."

(Last name of spokesperson) said that death rates among people with diabetes increase 5 to 15 percent during a flu epidemic. Getting a flu or pneumonia shot is one preventive measure they can easily undertake; yet, only half of them get an annual flu shot, and only a third have gotten a pneumonia shot. This campaign is an opportunity for individuals to put prevention into practice.

# # #

Note: This sample general press release will help increase awareness about flu and pneumonia shots. Please complete and send it to local media even if you don't have a specific event or program.

For Immediate Release
(Date)

Contact: (your name)
(telephone number)

CDC Says Vaccines Can Be a Life Preserver for People With Diabetes

(your town, your state)— An influenza (flu) shot and a pneumococcal vaccine (pneumonia shot) can substantially reduce the risk of dying with flu and pneumonia for people with diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Deaths among people with diabetes increase 5 to 15 percent during flu epidemics, and people with diabetes are about three times more likely to die with flu and pneumonia. (Enter statistics for diabetes and flu cases in your town, if they are available.) Yet, only half of people with diabetes get an annual flu shot, and only a third have gotten a pneumococcal shot.

“People with diabetes may be unaware that their disease can make their immune system more vulnerable to severe cases of, or even death with, the flu and pneumonia,” said Dr. Frank Vinicor,

director of the Division of Diabetes Translation at CDC. "Flu and pneumonia shots are easy, safe, preventive measures that people with diabetes can take to protect themselves from the risks associated with flu and pneumonia."

Doctors recommend flu shots in September and October, before flu season, which runs generally November through March. Local health departments have more information about dates, times, and places where flu shots are administered locally. People should consult their doctor before receiving a flu shot, a pneumococcal vaccine or any other vaccine; some people should not be vaccinated.

Diabetes is a serious health problem that affects approximately 16 million people in the United States. Unfortunately, only two-thirds of them are diagnosed, leaving a third who are not under care for the disorder. Those at higher risk for diabetes include African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics and Asians, or anyone who is overweight, has high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or a strong family history of the disease.

# # #

Note: You can adapt this pitch letter to inform media about your event or program.

(Date), 1999

(Name and address of reporter/editor)

Dear (Mr./Ms. last name):

People with diabetes are about three times more likely to die with influenza (flu) and pneumonia, and deaths among people with diabetes increase 5 to 15 percent during flu epidemics. Getting a flu or pneumonia shot is an easy, safe, preventive measure; yet, only half of people with diabetes get an annual flu shot, and only a third have gotten a pneumonia shot.

People with diabetes may not know that the common flu can cause them much more than aches and pains. It can mean an extended illness and even death. An article addressing this timely

and important issue would alert your audience to take the necessary precautions. Here are some story ideas:

- (Name of organization) is sponsoring a flu prevention fair from (start time) to (end time) on (date) at (location) to encourage people with diabetes to get a flu shot as part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's flu shot awareness campaign.

- Getting flu or pneumococcal shots are preventive measures that people with diabetes can easily undertake. The shots are not costly and they do not cause the flu or pneumonia; services are usually available at clinics, pharmacies, and grocery stores before flu season (generally November through March). See your health provider about getting a pneumonia shot.

Enclosed is background information on this issue. I will call you to answer any questions or provide additional information. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to call me at (phone number). I will be able to put you in touch with diabetes experts who can provide technical assistance and interviews. Thank you for helping spread this important message.

Sincerely,

name
title
agency

Enclosures