September 1999

Dear Health Care Provider:

Even though we as health care providers think we do a good job of immunizing our patients with diabetes against flu and pneumonia, national statistics show that many of them have not received life-saving and cost-effective vaccinations for these serious illnesses. Consider the facts:

- People with diabetes are 3 times more likely to die with flu and pneumonia.
- Yet, in 1997, only half of people with diabetes reported getting a flu shot, and only a third reported ever getting a pneumococcal shot, a vaccine capable of preventing the most common form of severe pneumonia.
- Pneumococcal disease, including pneumococcal pneumonia, bacteremia and meningitis, has become more resistant to antibiotic treatment, making it more difficult to treat.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is asking for your help this year to immunize your patients with diabetes against influenza and pneumococcal pneumonia.

- Remember to **recommend flu and pneumonia shots** to patients with diabetes when they come for routine care, especially this flu season.
- Consider **instituting standing orders** to make the immunizations a routine part of the health care regimen for patients with diabetes.
- Educate patients about **how to obtain reimbursement** for vaccination.
- Educate patients about how **simple, safe and effective** the flu and pneumonia shots are, and how dangerous the flu and pneumonia are for people with diabetes.

In addition, CDC is conducting a public service program, called ***With Diabetes, Prevention is Control***, which highlights the fact that a flu shot can be a life preserver for people with diabetes. The effort contains public service messages and educational materials such as brochures for the public about flu and pneumococcal shots and posters for health providers' waiting rooms, clinics, and anywhere else people with diabetes will see it.

Please join us in making flu and pneumococcal vaccinations for people with diabetes a priority in your health care this flu season. You can make a difference.

Sincerely,

F. Vinicor, MD, MPH

Frank Vinicor, MD
Director, Division of Diabetes Translation
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Walter A. Orenstein

Walter A. Orenstein, MD
Director, National Immunization Program
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention