Communicating with Patients about Vaccines

JoEllen Wolicki, BSN, RN
Nurse Educator
Communication and Education Branch

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases
Immunization Services Division
Disclosures

- JoEllen Wolicki is a federal government employee with no financial interest in, or conflict with, the manufacturer of any product named in this presentation.

- The speaker will not discuss a vaccine not currently licensed by the FDA.

- The speaker will not discuss the off-label use of any vaccines.
What do we know?

BACKGROUND
What We Know…

- Vaccines protect from serious, often fatal diseases
- Vaccines are safe and effective
- Record low rates for most VPDs
- Increasing number of vaccines for both children and adults
What We (and Patients) See …

- The Vaccine Book: Making the Right Decision for Your Child
  - Robert W. Sears, MD, FAAP

- WORRIED ALL THE TIME
  - Overparenting in an Age of Anxiety and How to Stop It
  - Jenny McCarthy

- Vaccine Injury Compensation

- AUTISM’S FALSE PROPHETS
  - Bad Science, Risky Medicine, and the Search for a Cure
  - Paul A. Offit, M.D.

- Amanda Peet Vaccination spokesperson

- GREEN OUR VACCINES
  - Too Many, Too Soon

- Recommended Immunization Schedule for Persons Aged 0-6 Years—United States • 2008

---

*This schedule indicates the recommended ages for routine administration of currently licensed childhood vaccines, as of September 1, 2007, for children aged ≤6 years. Additional vaccines may be licensed and recommended during the year. Therefore, the combination and sequence of doses given may be different for children who are older than 6 months of age or who have underlying chronic conditions or other compromised states. Consult the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the manufacturer for additional information. The schedule is for current use only and should not be used for any other purpose.*
Less Disease and More Vaccines = More Attention to Vaccine Risks

- Low disease awareness = increased focus on vaccine risks
- Low tolerance for vaccine risks
- Full and complicated immunization schedule
Immunization – A Complex Communication Environment

- “When prevention works, nothing happens”
- Dynamic, changing
- Competing and conflicting
  - Health messages
  - Guidance and advice
  - Purposes and objectives
- Many places to find and get information
- Time is often limited
- Different groups of patients, different needs
What have we learned?

RESEARCH
Guiding principles and lessons learned

- Strong support among health care professionals for the existing immunization schedule
- Discussing vaccine safety issues and concerns with parents is now a standard
- Bottom line is that kids are getting immunized but discussion and education are taking longer than in the past
- Health care professionals are still the most trusted source of vaccine information and advice for most parents
- Educational materials should supplement—not replace—conversations between health care professionals and parents
Research with Parents

- 2008 through 2011 HealthStyles parent mail surveys
- 2008 and 2009 focus group research with mothers
- 2008 online testing of draft educational materials with mothers
- 2010 and 2012 national poll of parent vaccine attitudes and behaviors
- 2010 cognitive interviews and focus groups with mothers to test readability of Vaccine Information Statements (VIS)
- 2011 focus groups and intercept interviews with parents to discuss vaccination barriers and facilitators and to test message concepts
  - Includes research with high and low acculturation Hispanic parents and with fathers
Parents

- **Mothers**
  - Are the decision makers when it comes to their children’s health.
  - Consistently listed doctor’s visits and immunizations among the most important things you can do to keep your children healthy.
  - Questioned the need for vaccinations based on concerns about efficacy or a perceived low prevalence of VPDs
  - Most often turn to their children’s doctors if they have questions.
  - Want to hear consistent things from multiple sources they deem credible.

- The internet also was a frequently cited source of information, primarily through the use of search engines (e.g., Google).

- Stories and personal recommendations from doctors had an impact.
What We Hear about Vaccine Conversations…

- Health care professionals say:
  - “A hot topic…brought up by many parents.”
  - “I’ve spent more time talking to patients in the last 5 years [about vaccines] than…in the previous 20.”
  - “Sometimes I feel like a car salesman. It wears you down after a while.”
What We Hear about Vaccine Conversations…

- **Patients say:**
  - “…when I was talking to my physician, I almost felt a slight bit of anger when I told him I didn’t want to do all the shots at the same time…I feel like we were going back and forth about it.”
  - “I switched doctors…the first physician…used a lot of big words. I really could never even understand what she was talking about. I go to…doctor who welcomes all of your questions…”
  - “I trust my doctor…He went to med school. He knows way more than I will by seeing it on my computer.”
What can we do?

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
Communication Challenges

- **Provider**
  - Has little time for discussion
  - Suffers a sense of rejection as wise advisor

- **Patient**
  - Wants to be heard
  - Looking for reliable information
  - Wants control; wants to make decision
Key Drivers of Communication Planning

- The facts don’t speak for themselves. Personal accounts from peers or health care professionals are persuasive and memorable.

- There is a spectrum of parental and patient attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors requiring some tailoring and layering of communication practices and materials.
Each Encounter Takes its Own Shape

Sometimes it can feel like going around in circles!
What Determines Trust?
Low Concern Settings

- Competence/expertise: 80-85%
- All other factors: 15-20%

Randall Hyer, NIC, 2005
What Determines Trust?
High Concern Settings

- Honesty/openness: 15-20%
- Competence/expertise: 15-20%
- Dedication/commitment: 15-20%
- Listening/caring/empathy: 50%

Randall Hyer, NIC, 2005
Key Drivers of Communication Planning

- Health care professionals play the most important role in addressing parents’ questions and concerns.
- A strong recommendation from you is the main reason patients/parents decide to vaccinate.
- Vaccine safety issues are a concern for many parents.
- Using risk communication strategies can maintain trust.
Risk Communication

- Science of communicating information effectively in:
  - High-concern, high-stress
  - Emotionally charged, or
  - Controversial situations

- When done correctly, this approach will strengthen credibility
What Does All of This Mean to You and Your Patients?

- Educate about vaccines and the diseases they prevent
- Communicate benefits of vaccines
- Discuss risks and side effects of vaccines and what to do should a side effect occur
- Provide your recommendation
- Reinforce social norm to vaccinate
What Does All of This Mean to You and Your Patients?

- Give resources prior to the vaccination visit
- Use language they understand/prefer
- Layer information
- Use personal stories
- Use credible resources to reinforce your messages

AND

- Ensure all staff are communicating the same messages
Vaccine Information Statements (VISs)

- A VIS outlines the benefits and risks of a vaccine

- All vaccine providers are required by the National Vaccine Childhood Injury Act to give a VIS to vaccine recipients or their parents/legal representatives prior to every dose of specific vaccines

- Give a VIS regardless of the patient's age
Materials Targeted for Patients

- Plain language pieces
- Basic overview of disease and vaccine
- Some include an abbreviated story
- Clearly show benefits and risks
Making a C.A.S.E. for Vaccines

- A model for talking to parents
  - Created by Allison Singer, MD, President, Autism Science Foundation
- A mnemonic to organize a rapid, useful response
- Lacks published studies of its efficacy
- Nonetheless, draws on communication strategies and principles

Robert M Jacobson, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, Mayo Clinic
Framework for Communicating: C.A.S.E

- Corroborate: Acknowledge the parent’s concern; find some point on which you can agree; validate the emotion
- About me: Describe what you have done to build your knowledge base and expertise
- Science: Describe what the science says; provide accurate, truthful, and documented information
- Explain/advise: Advise parent/patient based on the science

Singer, Allison. Vaccines: Communicating with Unsure Parents. NIC 2010
C.A.S.E. Example

- **Corroborate:**
  - “I understand you are concerned about whether the vaccine is safe, considering your renal disease.”

- **About me:**
  - “Because I have heard this from other patients, I have done some research on this subject. I always want to provide the safest care based on the most up-to-date information.”
Science:
- “We are recommending vaccination because your renal disease puts you at higher risk for invasive pneumococcal disease.”

Explain/advise:
- “I strongly recommend pneumococcal vaccine to help keep you healthy and reduce the risk of this serious disease for you. CDC and renal and immunology experts recommend the vaccine for renal patients, too.”
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
Competency-based education for staff is critical.

Multiple education products available free through the CDC website:
- Immunization courses
- Netconferences
- You Call the Shots self-study modules

Continuing education is available

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed/default.htm
Vaccine and Immunization Resources

- Questions? E-mail CDC
  - Providers
  - Parents and patients
  nipinfo@cdc.gov
  www.cdc.gov/cdcinfo

- CDC website
  www.cdc.gov/vaccines

- Twitter for health care personnel
  @CDCIZlearn

- Influenza
  www.cdc.gov/flu

- Vaccine Safety
  www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety

- State Immunization Programs
  www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/awardee-imz-websites.html
What Am I Asking You To Do

• **Share** reliable information about vaccines
• **Educate** about VPD disease
• **Listen** to patient’s concerns
• **Respond** to questions and concerns with credible information
• **Give** a strong recommendation for vaccination
Questions??

JOELLEN WOLICKI, BSN, RN
jwolicki@cdc.gov