

Children with asthma are at increased risk for influenza-related morbidity and mortality and consequently are recommended to receive an annual influenza vaccination. Despite longstanding recommendations, influenza vaccination rates among children with asthma are very low. In October 2006, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) implemented a mechanism to identify children at increased risk for influenza complications, using administrative data from Medicaid and other state health programs. This information is incorporated into the Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR), the statewide automated system for tracking immunizations, to prompt health care providers to encourage influenza vaccination for these high-risk children.

Of particular focus in the initial years of implementation is asthma, given its high prevalence in Michigan and low influenza vaccination rate. The processes for identifying children with asthma and operationalizing the MCIR high-risk indicator suggest several key questions, including the extent to which the mechanism accurately identifies children with asthma, the extent to which providers use the high-risk indicator, and the overall impact on influenza vaccination rates.

The research team will address these questions through examination of existing state datasets, augmented by surveys of primary care providers and parents of children with asthma.

The research aims are to:

1. Assess the accuracy of the high-risk indicator, comparing parent-reported asthma severity at two points in the year with severity based on administrative data;
2. Evaluate provider use of the MCIR high-risk indicator and characteristics associated with its use; and
3. Measure the effect of the high-risk indicator on influenza vaccination rates among children with asthma.

Research methods will include interviews with parents, to document asthma symptoms and severity; survey of health care providers, to explore awareness and utilization of the high-risk indicator; and analysis of immunization data, to examine trends in influenza vaccination. Results will not only suggest improvements to the current system, but also serve as a practical model for health plans and health care systems across Michigan to expand this initiative beyond high-risk children enrolled in Medicaid and the CSHCS program.

Assessment of a Claims-Based Method to Identify Children with Asthma for Influenza Vaccination is funded by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation

For more information, please contact:

Principal Investigator: Kevin J. Dombkowski, DrPH
Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit
University of Michigan
Division of General Pediatrics
300 North Ingalls, 6E08
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-5456
Telephone: 734-615-8145
Fax: 734-764-2599
Email: kjd@med.umich.edu