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IMMUNIZATIONS NEWSLETTER

PROVIDING GSA MEMBERS WITH UPDATES ON ADULT IMMUNIZATIONS

SEPTEMBER 2018

Developed by The Gerontological Society of America

FEATURES

News

- Vaccine products are being shipped for the 2018–19 influenza season, including the first of 25 million doses of [Sanofi's Flublok Quadrivalent \(Influenza Vaccine\)](#) and [Fluzone High-Dose \(Influenza Vaccine\)](#), both of which are indicated in older adults.
- The application of **polysaccharides as vaccine adjuvants** is the subject of two review articles in the August 23 issue of *Vaccine*. One article describes ways of [making polysaccharides more immunogenic](#); the other focuses specifically on [beta-glucans as immune adjuvants](#).

Resources

- **Voices for Vaccines** has compiled a [useful listing of resources](#) that can be shared in clinics, physician offices, pharmacies, and online. Included are handouts, podcasts, tools, videos, and blog posts for adults as well as patients in other age groups.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop [The Junior Disease Detectives: Operation Outbreak](#). This graphic novel educates youth audiences about variant influenza and the detective work performed by public and animal health experts during disease outbreaks.

COMMUNICATIONS

As influenza vaccine begins to ship to physician offices and pharmacies, providers may wonder about the ideal time to begin vaccinating patients. For older adults, the question is particularly important because of documented declining immunity throughout the influenza season.

There are several options available to older adults, at least two of which have been formulated specifically to create a stronger immune response in this group. Ultimately, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) recommends balancing the potentially increased immunity during winter months when vaccinating later with the possibility of missing an opportunity to vaccinate someone at all. Giving a strong recommendation for administering the vaccine when the patient is present in the office increases the level of protection for those individuals vaccinated and for those in the community.



PROMOTING ACCESS STARTS WITH EDUCATING PEOPLE ABOUT NEED

Advocates in Washington promote many different issues and causes. All face one question, regardless of the topic: Why is this important?

For vaccines, establishing their importance in health begins with education. It hasn't been that many years since deadly infections were the diseases people feared in the way we fear cancer or heart attacks. Yet people have largely forgotten about the role vaccines played in eliminating life-threatening pathogens such as smallpox and polio. People view modern-day viral diseases such as Ebola, Zika, or HIV as infections that happen to those in lands far away or with risk factors that don't apply to them.

The [Adult Vaccine Access Coalition \(AVAC\)](#) is an important educator of federal legislators and policymakers about the importance of vaccines and reasons why adult immunizations are just as important as those for children. GSA is an active participant in AVAC. Patricia D'Antonio, RPh, MS, MBA, BCGP, Vice President of Professional Affairs at GSA, was recently named co-chair of AVAC, serving with Phyllis Arthur, MBA, Senior Director for Vaccines, Immunotherapeutics, and Diagnostics Policy at the Biotechnology Innovation Organization. AVAC was profiled in the [September 2017 issue of the NAVVP Immunizations Newsletter](#).

This year, and continuing into 2021, AVAC has a major assist in its educational mission from the Smithsonian. Now on display at the National Museum of Natural History on the National Mall, "Outbreak: Epidemics in a Connected World" helps people understand how intercontinental travel and other realities of today's world mean that "an outbreak anywhere is a threat everywhere."



SOCIAL RESEARCH/POLICY/PRACTICE

The first week of October, AVAC will take the "Outbreak" message straight to Capitol Hill in the form of a pop-up exhibit in the Russell Senate Office Building rotunda. A reception in early October will draw Members of Congress and their staff members to the exhibit, where they will interact with AVAC's 50+ diverse membership of health care providers, pharmacies, vaccine innovators, public health organizations, and patient and consumer groups.

AVAC spends a lot time on the Hill and with the Administration.

The coalition's three core areas—improving reporting of adult vaccinations into state immunization information systems (IIS), improving adult immunization rates by reducing barriers (including reducing financial barriers for patients and administrative hurdles for providers), and supporting federal benchmarks and quality measures of adult immunizations—bring the group into the offices of dozens of Members of Congress each year.





AVAC also works to secure funding for immunization programming through the federal appropriations process as well as increase education and awareness on immunization infrastructure. AVAC partnered with the Alliance for Health Policy on a healthy aging and immunizations briefing for the media last February.

As part of its commitment to strengthen IIS, AVAC has been working to incorporate immunizations into strategic pandemic planning and response. Should a bioterrorism incident occur, IIS will be critical for identifying which people need vaccines or additional doses of vaccines they may have received previously.

BEHAVIORAL/SOCIAL SCIENCES

The “Outbreak” exhibit was purposely designed to make people aware of zoonoses—diseases that can spread between animals and people—and the epidemics and pandemics that can spawn easily and quickly in today’s world.

Despite the exhibit’s only-too-obvious fright factor, the curator of the Smithsonian exhibit, Sabrina Sholts, emphasized they also wanted to convey positive messages along with risks. For example, visitors can interact with a large world map and see bubbles with how different geographic areas are performing on the 90/90/90 goals of having 90% of people who have HIV being aware of their infection, 90% of those people being on effective antiretroviral agents, and 90% of those people having controlled infections by 2020. Some parts of the world are doing better than others, but regardless, each bubble has an “upside” comment, providing information on positive trends and actions in that area with respect to HIV and AIDS.



HEALTH SCIENCES

Nothing is more frustrating in the clinical setting than to make a strong recommendation for vaccination, have the patient concur, and then find out that the out-of-pocket cost is too high because of Medicare Part D copayments or lack of insurance coverage. AVAC is working to address this challenge on multiple fronts such as by increasing the opportunities for older adults to be vaccinated as part of the Welcome to Medicare and Annual Wellness Visits and by working to eliminate barriers to immunization faced by patients and providers.

Differences in vaccine coverage under Medicare Parts B and D are another particular concern for AVAC. All Medicare beneficiaries are eligible to receive Part B vaccines at no cost (including influenza and pneumococcal vaccines). Part D is optional, so not all patients have its coverage. Even if a patient has Part D coverage, copayments vary widely depending on which prescription drug plan the person chose. These differences are confusing to begin with—and can create out-of-pocket costs that put shingles vaccine and other Part D vaccines out of reach for many older adults.





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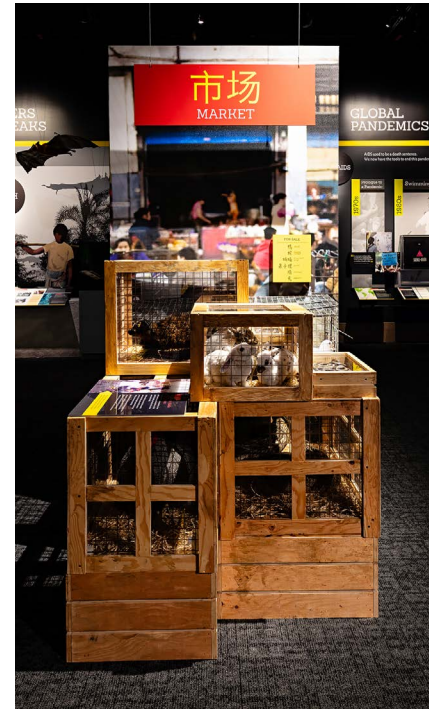
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BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

The Smithsonian exhibit includes sections on “Responding to Outbreaks,” “Working Together,” and “Searching for Solutions,” all of which show the upside of progress against epidemics and pandemics, including the development of new vaccines. Young people who visit the exhibit learn about possible careers as “disease detectives” and researchers into viruses, vaccines, and vectors of disease.

Efforts to develop better influenza vaccines are a particular emphasis of “Outbreak.” After sharing the history of the Spanish flu pandemic from 100 years ago and the 50 million to 100 million people who died from it, the exhibit explains that influenza is probably the greatest current threat for a pandemic producing widespread mortality. For preventing a repeat of the 1918–20 pandemic, vaccines are the best protection we have—and research is exploring ways of producing a pandemic vaccine more quickly.

While scientists are working on that concern, AVAC and its partners will continue making sure that voices are heard in Washington about the value of vaccines and why they are so important in the nation’s health as well as in its defense against bioterrorism. Legislators and policymakers need to know the facts about adult immunizations, and with GSA participating, AVAC will be using tools like the “Outbreak” exhibit to carry those messages forward.



The *NAVVP Immunizations Newsletter* is produced monthly by The Gerontological Society of America and is supported in part by Merck and Pfizer.

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