



Pharmacists as Childhood Immunizers

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The benefit of pharmacists as vaccinators in both adults and children has been documented in multiple studies.^{1,2,3,4,5,6} Pharmacists have well established themselves as critical partners in meeting vaccination and public health goals. Whether it is serving as primary immunizers, hosting other providers in the pharmacy to facilitate access to vaccines or as vaccine educators, pharmacists have a long history of involvement with vaccines.² Benefits of pharmacist-administered vaccines include accessibility and convenience. The Pediatric Pharmacy Association (PPA) supports the expanded authority of pharmacists and pharmacy interns under a pharmacist's supervision to order and administer vaccines to children age 3 years and older pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) emergency privileges during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷ Expanding the population that may receive pharmacist-administered vaccines may improve vaccination rates in this age group as well as strengthen public health, especially during a pandemic.⁸ In addition, this action may avoid preventable diseases and added strain to the healthcare system as we prepare to deal with the overlap of the COVID-19 pandemic and influenza season.

Talking Points

- Pharmacists shall follow the HHS Standards for Pediatric Immunization Practice.⁹
- Pharmacists shall keep abreast of the latest vaccine schedules and updates in order to provide the most up-to-date information. Ongoing professional education shall highlight pediatric specific administration techniques, distraction and non-pharmacological and pharmacological pain management, and information to combat vaccine hesitancy while dispelling common vaccination myths.
- Pharmacists shall actively work to engage and educate the public about the importance of routine immunizations and well-child visits and develop robust referral plans for emergencies and referral to primary care providers as appropriate.
- State boards of pharmacy should recognize pharmacists as providers and pass statutory authority in line with the federal guidance.
- A national database should be developed to provide secure patient-specific lifetime vaccination records that are accessible to all healthcare workers who administer vaccines.
- Pharmacists should have access to and be required to report immunizations to state or national registries where applicable. Pharmacists shall communicate all immunizations administered to the patient's primary care provider. If immunizations are declined, the pharmacist should notify the patient's primary care provider. In addition, pharmacists

shall document and report adverse events to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

- The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program should allow pharmacies to apply and participate in the VFC program so all children regardless of economic status are allowed to take advantage of this expanded accessibility to receive lifesaving childhood vaccines.
- If a pharmacy is unable to provide an immunization in a cost-effective manner, patients shall be referred to other pharmacies or primary care locations which can administer immunizations at minimal to no cost to qualifying patients.

References

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