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NAME
Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
ADDRESS
City, State, Zip

RE: Influenza Immunization Standard for Health Care Workers

Dear NAME:

Immunize LA Kids is a coalition of community based organizations, health care providers, concerned citizens and others who work to improve the immunization rates in the South Los Angeles area. The coalition was formed with CDC funding to implement and support strategies to improve immunization up-to-date rates among Latino and African American children in South L.A. On behalf of the Coalition, I am writing to urge the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) to add an accreditation standard that requires hospitals to have a system for measuring and optimizing the rate of influenza immunization for health care workers.

CDC's National Health Interview data (March 2004) indicates that only 38% of health care workers were vaccinated for influenza in 2002. In addition, epidemiological data suggests health care workers can spread the highly contagious influenza virus to patients in their care. While we understand that most acute facilities have an immunization program in place, the impact of these programs on immunization rates has not been optimal in the absence of a comprehensive, concerted effort by health care institutions, employers, insurers, and allied professional organizations to immunize their workers. Furthermore, hospitals can actually save money for themselves (reduced worker absenteeism) as well as for health care system (reduced patient morbidity) as well as save lives by ensuring a high level of vaccination among health care workers.

We believe that JCAHO has the ability to positively influence influenza vaccination programs in health care institutions-therby helping to create the concerted effort needed to increase immunization rates among health care workers. Because most hospitals are required to adopt and implement JCAHO standards in order to participate in Medicare (and by proxy, other payers' programs), we believe creating a standard that would assess a hospitals health care worker immunization program would be a powerful tool in the war against the ravages of influenza. We urge you to add an accreditation standard that requires hospitals to have a system for measuring and optimizing the rate of influenza immunization for health care workers. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Julia Heinzerling, MPH at 323-757-7244, extension 228 or me at 323-357-6658.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Oliver T. Brooks, MD
Chair, Immunize LA Kids Coalition & Chief, Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine: Watts HealthCare Corporation

Note: The above position was approved by consensus of the leadership of the Coalition. It does not necessarily represent the opinion of any individual member of the Coalition or its Steering Committee.

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SLAHP WIC Program • South Los Angeles Immunization Project • Black Infant Health Project • Hospital-Based Breastfeeding Support • IZ LA Kids
Community Services of Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center