

Healthcare Organization Employees and Influenza Vaccination



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Samantha Salatino • HH/HLST 4210: Health Care Ethics: Policy and Management Perspectives

ABSTRACT

Using ethical reasoning, the importance of why a mandatory requirement for all staff employed within a healthcare institution to obtain an annual influenza virus vaccination as a condition of employment is explored. With a mandatory requirement, it enforces the obligated duty of health care staff, has the potential to protect patients and residents within health care institutions, and reduce financial costs of the health care system.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is aimed at providing an understanding to the influenza virus vaccination, and it's benefits for both staff, patients and residents. It will identify several reasons why a mandatory requirement for healthcare staff to obtain the influenza vaccination is required. It is important to bring attention to this recurring concern, and bring a common understanding to the vaccination importance. Therefore, it is important to clarify it's benefits, and create a requirement for it for healthcare staff, unless medically unable to receive the vaccination.

METHODS

A literature review was conducted to find information related to outcomes in obtaining the influenza vaccination. Articles were gathered from online, and keywords included "influenza," "vaccination," "patient outcomes," "patient safety," and "healthcare staff." Sites used to gather information included the National Council for Biotechnology Improvement, Proquest, Canadian Institute for Health Information, Wiley, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and ScienceDirect.

RESULTS



Duty to Provide Effective Care

Image by Cattaleeya Thongsriphong from the Noun Project

- The medical duty of a healthcare worker is one's obligation to provide reasonable care while avoiding any injury (Bryden and Storey, 2011)
- When healthcare staff are vaccinated, they may continue to quality patient care, without causing added harm (Ottenberg et al., 2011)
- When there is a greater amount of trust between healthcare staff and patients, there is an increase in quality of life
- Staff were able to perform their duty of care, by generating trust between the staff and the patient

RESULTS continued

- There was also an increase in health habits and treatment satisfaction with greater trust between individuals involved (Birkhauer et al., 2017)
- With the incorporation of a mandatory influenza virus vaccination for health care workers, it develops public trust and patient safety (Ottenberg et al., 2011)
- When there is a lack of trust between patients and staff within a health care organization, it prevents staff from providing their duty as staff, as patients may not trust their intentions.



Improve Patient Outcomes

Image by Sean Maldjian from the Noun Project

- Individuals working within health care organizations are at a greater risk of developing influenza virus (Dini et al., 2017)
- There is a risk to patient safety due to the increased risk of staff developing the influenza virus (Dini et al., 2017)
- Health care staff are also able to prevent the spread against influenza virus among one another, which increases patient outcomes as well.
- It has been estimated that 51% to 86% of physicians who work in primary or secondary care come to work sick (Chyi Tan, Robinson, Jayathissa & Weatherall, 2014)
- Doctors stated as well that they had come to work sick due to both having an obligation to coworkers, and to patients (Chyi Tan, Robinson, Jayathissa & Weatherall, 2014). This however also increases the likelihood of passing the illness onto a colleague
- If health care staff are determined to attend work, even when sick, it would benefit both staff and patients in an environment where we can protect ourselves from a common virus (Sanchez-Reilly et al., 2013)
- This shows the importance of immunizing health care staff, and their peers to protect both against something currently possible to immunize against. It creates an environment less toxic, and increases the quality of care one can deliver when effective, preventative measures are taken in advance



Reducing Financial Healthcare Costs

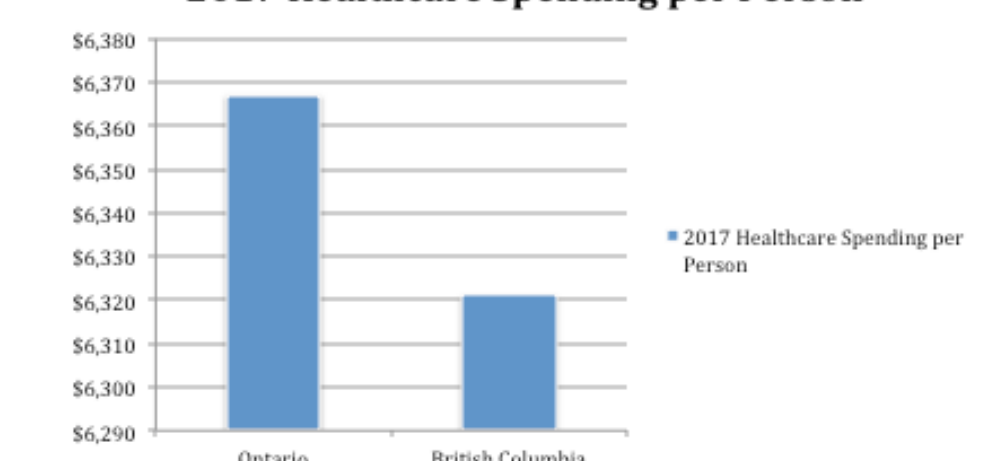
Image by Guilherme Furtado from the Noun Project

- According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, in 2017 Ontario spent an average of \$6,367 per person on health care ("How does health spending differ across provinces and territories?", n.d.)
- Ontario currently does not have a vaccination requirement for health care staff
- British Columbia spent an average of \$6,321 per person in 2017 British Columbia established a vaccinate-or-mask policy in 2012
- In 2017, Ontario had an overall 2.7% increase in spending, whereas British Columbia only had a 2.0% increase in spending This is a difference of \$46.00/person being spent more in Ontario, than British Columbia

RESULTS continued

- When the vaccinate-or-mask policy was implemented in British Columbia, research concluded that after this policy was implemented, there was overall a reduction in staff absenteeism (Van Buynder et al., 2015)
- A mandatory influenza vaccination policy for healthcare staff also reduces costs by reducing the need for treatment when the virus is contracted. It is estimated that the influenza vaccine has decreased the risk of obtaining the virus by roughly 40% to 60% ("Vaccine Effectiveness - How Well Does the Flu Vaccine Work?", n.d.)
- A study was conducted at a hospital, which found that 15% of viral infections at the organization had developed a health care acquired respiratory virus. In these cases, influenza virus was the main agent that caused the health care acquired virus (Gutierrez, Cerda, Le Corre, Medina & Ferres, 2018).
- The cost associated with treating individuals analyzed in several hospitals, including Toronto-based ones, was \$14,612/person when requiring a hospital stay due to influenza virus (Ng et al., 2017)

2017 Healthcare Spending per Person



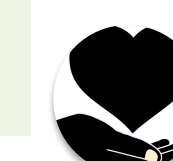
DISCUSSION

Having a mandatory influenza vaccination for eligible healthcare employees will add to an individual's duty to provide quality while also improving the trust between employees and those requiring care, patient-centred care, improve patient outcomes, and reduce financial costs to the healthcare system. The Canadian health care system faces some implications when attempting to establish this policy among health care staff. Some staff may not be receptive to change, and enforcement of obtaining a vaccination mandatory for them because they are employees of a health care organization, but not for the general public. Greater awareness and promotion of benefits can assist policy makers in implementing this type of policy within organizations. Enforcement of positive effects that can affect staff members when there is a mandatory policy such as decreased staff absenteeism can reduce the reluctance to obtaining a mandatory influenza virus vaccination.



BENEFICIENCE

Doing good, or being able to balance the benefits of a decision with the risks.



NON-MALEFICIENCE

Do the least amount of harm, to obtain a great amount of good.

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