

THE CSTE WASHINGTON REPORT

Marcia S. Mabee, MPH, PhD
Editor
11479 Waterview
Reston, Virginia 20190
mmabee@ix.netcom.com
703-709-3001

August 11, 2005
16

Volume 9, Number

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ... CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION RATES SURPASS HEALTHY PEOPLE 2010 GOAL
 - ... NATIONAL PROJECT LAUNCHED TO REDUCE SURGICAL COMPLICATIONS BY 25 PERCENT
 - ... SURVEY UNCOVERS SURPRISING ATTITUDES TOWARDS HIV VACCINE RESEARCH
 - ... MORE THAN HALF THE U.S. POPULATION IS SENSITIVE TO ONE OR MORE ALLERGENS
-

EDITOR'S NOTE: Congress in recess, and this is the last August Washington Report before September.

In an effort to improve surgical care in hospitals nationwide, a partnership of leading public and private health care organizations has launched a project to reduce surgical complications by 25 percent by the year 2010. Surgical complications can take a measurable toll on a patient's health and safety, extending treatment and leading to longer hospital stays. The Surgical Care Improvement Project or SCIP (pronounced "skip") is designed to provide hospitals, physicians, nurses and other caregivers with effective strategies to reduce four common surgical complications—surgical wound infections, blood clots, perioperative heart attack and ventilator-associated pneumonia. The strategies are based on the best available science and will be refined and improved as new scientific information becomes available.-- additional details are provided in this Washington Report.

The CSTE Washington Report is provided as an information resource for members of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists on federal legislation and regulation

affecting public health and epidemiology in the U.S. Legislation cited in the report can be accessed via <http://www.thomas.loc.gov> Regulations cited can be accessed via <http://www.gpo.gov>

CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION RATES SURPASS HEALTHY PEOPLE 2010

GOAL -- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced July 26 that the nation's childhood immunization coverage rates continue at record high levels, with about 81 percent of the nation's 19-to-35-month-old children receiving all the vaccinations in the recommended series. This is the first time coverage for the base line series of vaccines (4:3:1:3:3 series) has exceeded 80 percent which also represents the Healthy People 2010 goal. Healthy People establishes goals to improve the nation's health – increasing immunization coverage is one of its goals.

In 2004, coverage for the 4:3:1:3:3 series, which includes four doses of Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (DTaP), three or more doses of polio vaccine, one or more doses of measles-containing vaccine, three or more doses of Hib vaccine which can prevent meningitis and pneumonia, and three doses of hepatitis B vaccine, increased to 80.9 percent, compared to 79.4 percent in 2003, 74.8 percent in 2002, 73.7 percent in 2001 and 72.8 percent in 2000.

“These results are terrific news,” said Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the CDC. “They illustrate the tremendous progress we’ve made in preventing what were once common childhood diseases. Most importantly, these results show that parents have high levels of confidence in our vaccination recommendations. It’s encouraging to see that parents recognize the importance of protecting their children against diseases that while relatively uncommon, can cause serious harm.”

The 2004 National Immunization Survey also found significant increases in the percentage of young children receiving chickenpox and the childhood pneumococcal vaccine, two relatively recent additions to the childhood immunization schedule. The vaccines, because they were added in the past five years, are not yet included in the overall series. National coverage with chickenpox (varicella) vaccine increased to 87.5 percent in 2004 from 84.8 percent in 2003. Coverage for three or more doses of pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV7) increased to 73.2 percent in 2004 from 68.1 percent in 2003. Coverage for doses of PCV7 increased to 43.4 percent compared with 35.8 percent in 2003, the first year coverage was measured for the fourth dose.

The overall results indicated that vaccination rates for the fourth dose of DTaP vaccine, at 85.5 percent coverage, continued to lag behind other vaccines in the 4:3:1:3:3 series. As a result, the coverage estimates for the overall series is reduced.

The high immunization rates are also an indication that temporary shortages of some of the routinely recommended childhood vaccines primarily affected when, rather than whether, children were vaccinated. For example, some of the older children included in the 2004 NIS survey would have been eligible to receive DTaP during a March 2001-June 2002 shortage; however, DTaP coverage remained comparable to 2003.

In 2004, as in previous years, there was substantial variation in coverage levels among states and among cities. Estimated coverage with the 4:3:1:3:3 series ranged from 89.1% in Massachusetts to 68.4% in Nevada. The range in coverage among the 28 urban areas was similar as among the states. Among the 28 urban areas, the highest estimated coverage for the 4:3:1:3:3 series was 89.7% for Davidson County, Tennessee, and the lowest was 64.8% in El Paso County, Texas.

“We’re very pleased with the overall findings, but the survey also shows there are places where we have work to do,” said Dr. Stephen L. Cochi, acting Director of CDC’s National Immunization Program. “We want all children to be well protected from vaccine preventable diseases. If we want to prevent the return of diseases that are currently rare in the United States, we must maintain our high immunization rates, and work to ensure those rates are high in all states and communities.”

The National Immunization Survey findings were reported today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at a news conference sponsored by The National Partnership for Immunization (NPI) to kick off August as National Immunization Awareness Month. NPI is a not for profit organization dedicated to reducing vaccine preventable diseases among infants, children, adolescents and adults.

In addition to national estimates, the National Immunization Survey (NIS) provides vaccination coverage estimates among children 19 to 35 months of age for each of the 50 states and 28 selected urban areas.

CDC uses a quarterly random-digit-dialing sample of telephone numbers for each of the 78 survey areas to collect vaccination data for all age-eligible children. During 2004, healthcare provider vaccination records were obtained for 21,998 children. The overall response rate for eligible households was 67.4%.

The complete 2004 National Immunization Survey data will be released with the CDC’s *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* on Thursday, July 28.

NATIONAL PROJECT LAUNCHED TO REDUCE SURGICAL COMPLICATIONS BY 25 PERCENT

-- In an effort to improve surgical care in hospitals nationwide, a partnership of leading public and private health care organizations has launched a project to reduce surgical complications by 25 percent by the year 2010.

Surgical complications can take a measurable toll on a patient's health and safety, extending treatment and leading to longer hospital stays. The Surgical Care Improvement Project or SCIP (pronounced "skip") is designed to provide hospitals, physicians, nurses and other caregivers with effective strategies to reduce four common surgical complications—surgical wound infections, blood clots, perioperative heart attack and ventilator-associated pneumonia. The strategies are based on the best available science and will be refined and improved as new scientific information becomes available.

Hospitals will be asked to join SCIP today at the American Hospital Association's Health Forum meeting in San Diego.

SCIP is one of the first national quality improvement initiatives to unite national hospital, physician and nursing organizations; the federal government; the organization that accredits hospitals; and private sector experts in far-reaching quality improvement and patient safety efforts.

"One reason SCIP is so important is because of the partnership," said Dr. Mark McClellan, Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, one of 10 national organizations spearheading SCIP. "The only way to get to a better healthcare system is if we're all working together with efforts that are led by health professionals—the surgeons, the anesthesiologists, the registered nurses, the other health professionals and hospitals. They are absolutely critical elements to the success of quality improvement. The reason that CMS is such a strong supporter of SCIP is because it has such broad involvement and leadership from health professionals." (**Editor's Note:** Select for [additional quotes](#).)

SCIP focuses on process measures, such as the appropriate use of antibiotics near the time of surgery and the use of beta blockers to prevent cardiovascular events.

The SCIP Partnership includes the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, American College of Surgeons, American Hospital Association, American Society of Anesthesiologists, Association of periOperative Registered Nurses, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and Veterans Health Administration.

For more information about SCIP, please visit www.medqic.org/scip, E-mail SCIPpartnership@okqio.sdps.org, or call (405) 840-2891.

SURVEY UNCOVERS SURPRISING ATTITUDES TOWARDS HIV VACCINE RESEARCH -- A survey of U.S. adults has found that a majority believe that HIV vaccines are the best hope for controlling the global AIDS epidemic and are confident such vaccines can be made. But while most of those surveyed felt it personally important to help support HIV vaccine research, a majority expressed reluctance to support a friend or family member's participation in an HIV vaccine clinical trial.

These were among the conflicting findings of a telephone survey of more than 3,500 adults to assess attitudes, knowledge and awareness of HIV vaccine research in the United States. The survey, conducted by members of the HIV Vaccine Communications Campaign of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health, points to the ongoing challenges HIV vaccine researchers face. A paper on the survey results is available online now and will be

published in an upcoming print issue of the *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*.

“Tens of thousands of volunteers are required for the more than 30 HIV vaccine clinical trials currently planned or under way,” says NIAID director Anthony S. Fauci, M.D. “It is essential that current and future trials involve volunteers from diverse communities to enable us to find a vaccine that works for all populations.”

“It is clear that we have a lot of work to do in explaining HIV vaccine research,” adds paper co-author Matthew Murguía, director of the Office of Program Operations and Scientific Information in the NIAID Division of AIDS. “We must develop strong partnerships with communities highly impacted by HIV/AIDS so individuals from these communities can make informed decisions about participating in HIV vaccine research.”

The survey, conducted between December 2002 and February 2003, polled 2,008 U.S. adults aged 18 years of or older randomly selected from the general population. An additional 1,501 U.S. adults interviewed were randomly selected from each of three specific subpopulations highly affected by HIV — African Americans, Hispanics and men who have sex with men.

The survey uncovered some unexpected attitudes and beliefs:

- * 47 percent of African Americans, 26 percent of Hispanics, 13 percent of men who have sex with men, and 18 percent of the general population believe that an HIV vaccine already exists but is being kept a secret.

- * Most subpopulation respondents — 78 percent of African Americans, 68 percent of men who have sex with men and 57 percent of Hispanics — either do not know whether or incorrectly believe that the vaccines being tested can cause HIV infection. Only 24 percent of the general population responded comparably.

- * Among men who have sex with men, 77 percent cited HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem. Only a small percentage of the other groups surveyed, however, agreed: 11 percent of Hispanics, 15 percent of the general population and 22 percent of African Americans.

- * In general, women had less knowledge and awareness than men about HIV vaccine research.

- * High percentages of each group felt it was important to personally support HIV vaccine research: 89 percent of both Hispanics and of men who have sex with men, 86 percent of African Americans and 73 percent of the general population. Nonetheless, many were reluctant to express strong support for friends or family members volunteering for HIV vaccine trials. Only 29 percent of the general population and 35 percent of African Americans said they would be extremely or very supportive. Hispanics and men who have sex with men were more inclined to be supportive: 46 percent and 68 percent, respectively.

The NIAID team also assessed trust in the U.S. government’s ability to protect HIV vaccine trial volunteers. While about half of three groups — men who have sex with men

(50 percent), African Americans (55 percent) and the general population (57 percent) — said they could trust the government to protect HIV vaccine trial volunteers, the rate of trust among Hispanics was significantly higher at 78 percent.

Based on interviews, focus groups and media analysis, NIAID team members first developed five key messages on vaccine research. They then designed the survey to determine whether these key messages were the most important ones for the HIV Vaccine Communications Campaign to address. These key messages were:

- * There is currently no vaccine to prevent HIV infection.
- * Only HIV-negative individuals can volunteer for a preventive HIV vaccine trial.
- * You cannot become infected with HIV from the vaccines being tested.
- * All populations must be involved in HIV vaccine research.
- * An HIV preventive vaccine, complemented by strong behavioral prevention programs and AIDS care and treatment, is the best way to end the epidemic.

The results of the survey, says Mr. Murguía, have helped identify which populations researchers need to target for better understanding of HIV vaccine research, as well as which messages need to be tailored to specific populations. The NIAID team will work to lower the barriers that inhibit potential volunteers from diverse populations from participating in HIV vaccine trials and to increase community support for those who volunteer for a trial.

MORE THAN HALF THE U.S. POPULATION IS SENSITIVE TO ONE OR MORE ALLERGENS -- More than fifty percent of the U.S. population tested positive to one or more allergens, according to a large national study. The new findings, based on data from the third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III), shows that 54.3% of individuals aged 6-59 years old had a positive skin test response to at least one of the 10 allergens tested. The highest prevalence rates were for dust mite, rye, ragweed, and cockroach, with about 25% of the population testing positive to each allergen. Peanut allergy was the least common, with 9% of the population reacting positively to that food allergen.

The new findings published in the August issue of the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* were conducted by researchers at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, both components of the National Institutes of Health.

A positive skin test result may mean the individual is more vulnerable to asthma, hay fever, and eczema. “Asthma is one of the world’s most significant chronic health conditions,” said David A. Schwartz, MD, the NIEHS Director. “Understanding what may account for the rising worldwide asthma rates will allow us to develop more effective prevention and treatment approaches.”

NHANES III is a nationally representative survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention between 1988-1994 to determine the health and nutritional status

of the U.S. population. Approximately 10,500 individuals participated in the skin testing. During these tests, skin was exposed to allergy-causing substances (allergens) and a positive test was determined by the size of the reaction on the skin. The 10 allergens tested include: Dust mite, german cockroach, cat, perennial rye, short ragweed, Bermuda grass, Russian thistle, White oak, *Alternaria alternata*, and peanuts.

Researchers also compared skin test responses between NHANES III and the previous survey, NHANES II, conducted from 1976-1980. The prevalence of a positive skin test response was much higher in NHANES III than in NHANES II.

According to the lead author, Samuel J. Arbes, Ph.D. of NIEHS, "An increase in prevalence is consistent with reports from other countries and coincides with an increase in asthma cases during that time." In the U.S., the prevalence of asthma increased 73.9% from 1980 to 1996. However, Dr. Arbes was quick to point out that differences in skin test procedures between the two surveys prevent the authors from definitively concluding that the prevalence of skin test positivity has increased in the U.S. population.

"There is still much we don't understand about why some people become sensitized to allergens and others do not," said Darryl C. Zeldin, MD, senior author on the paper. "Much more research is needed in order for us to understand the complex relationships between exposures to allergens, the development of allergic sensitization, and the onset and exacerbation of allergic diseases such as asthma."

The researchers recently added an allergy component to NHANES 2005-2006. In addition to the other NHANES data collection components, dust samples from the homes of 10,000 individuals are being analyzed for allergens, and blood samples taken from these individuals are being examined for antibodies to those allergens. This new NHANES 2005-2006 allergy component will allow researchers to gain a greater understanding of asthma and the roles that indoor allergens play in asthma and other allergic diseases.