



Workforce Immunization Policies for Daycare Employees within the North Central Health District

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to assess the adult immunization status and policy of childcare facilities within the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH), North Central Health District (NCHD) in an effort to encourage increased immunization coverage among daycare workers; promote the development of adult immunization policies in daycare facilities; and contribute to the public health efforts of health promotion and disease prevention. Vaccinations offer protection against serious and possibly deadly diseases and help limit their spread among the population, and so are mandatory in many settings that are characterized by regular social interactions in close and confined quarters. They have generally been required for children in licensed daycare and school settings since the early 1980s, but not for adults who also occupy these same settings (Cole & Swendiman, 2014).

A 10-item questionnaire regarding adult vaccination requirements and policies was mailed to administrators of all two hundred and seventy-one (271) licensed daycare facilities within the NCHD. Seventy-nine percent of the daycare facilities have no adult vaccination policies in place for staff members. Most (75%) facility directors indicated that such policies are needed, and 93% stated that vaccination education is important for their staff members. The study also revealed that about 7% of directors reported that vaccination education is not important and a little over 8% reported that a vaccination information session is not beneficial. From a policy perspective, the climate is favorable for the development of a workforce immunization policy for daycare workers and the possible implementation for such requirements.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this project is to assess the adult immunization status and policy of childcare facilities within the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH), North Central Health District (NCHD) in an effort to encourage increased immunization coverage among daycare workers; promote the development of adult immunization policies in daycare facilities; and contribute to the public health efforts of health promotion and disease prevention. Vaccines have played a monumental role in the control and prevention of communicable diseases in school settings throughout United States (Malone & Hinman, 2007; CDC, 2013). Georgia law requires that children attending childcare facilities or schools be protected from certain vaccine-preventable diseases (GDPH Immunization Guidelines for Schools and Childcare Facilities, 2014). While vaccination regulations have been instituted for children enrolled in child care facilities, there are no known regulations for the adults working in such facilities.

Child care givers are particularly susceptible to contracting diarrheal diseases such as Giardia and other diseases such as the flu, pertussis, and hepatitis because having close personal contact with the children they care for is a part of their job, and children under the age of five are vulnerable to infectious diseases (de Perio, Wiegand, & Evans, 2012; Cordell et al., 2004). For these reasons, preventing and controlling the transmission and spread of communicable diseases in this type of environment are important public health issues that should be considered by public health practitioners (Spokes, Ferson, & Ressler, 2011). The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends 13 different vaccinations for adults over 18 years of age and releases a recommended adult immunization schedule every year. Recommended vaccinations are especially important for the adults who work in environments where the risks of contracting a disease is considerably high.

METHODS

The NCHD is composed of 13 central Georgia counties which include Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Hancock, Houston, Jasper, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Putnam, Twiggs, Washington, and Wilkinson (NCHD, 2013). A packet containing a cover letter explaining the purpose of the research, assurances of confidentiality, a 10-item questionnaire, and a prepaid (stamped) return envelope was mailed to the directors of each of the 271 licensed daycare facilities. The questionnaire included items concerning counties in which facilities were located, number of children enrolled, number of staff members employed, vaccination record requirements, the presence of policies that promote vaccination and proof of vaccination, and the importance of educating daycare staff about vaccinations. Seventy-six of the 271 questionnaires were returned within the month-long data collection period, for a response rate of 28%. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data with descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

Facility Characteristics

- Thirty-seven percent of the returned surveys were from daycare facilities residing in rural settings while approximately 63% were located in urban settings.
- A variety of facility enrollment sizes were also represented in the data and they included 0-6, 7-20, and 21+ enrollment sizes. Facilities with 20 or less children comprised 38% of the sample and those with 21 and more represented 62% of the sample.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Sample Breakdown		
Total Number of District Facilities	271	
Sample Number of Facilities	76	
Response Rate	28.04%	
Sample Worker Population	773	
Sample Child Population	4305	
Sample Child to Facility Ratio	56.6:1	
Sample Child to Worker Ratio	5.6:1	
Staff Age Groups	%	n
18-29	38.2	292
30-39	17.8	136
40-49	19.1	146
50-59	16.9	129
60-69	6.8	52
70+	1.3	10
Total		765

Figure 1: Are Vaccination Records Required When Hiring Staff?

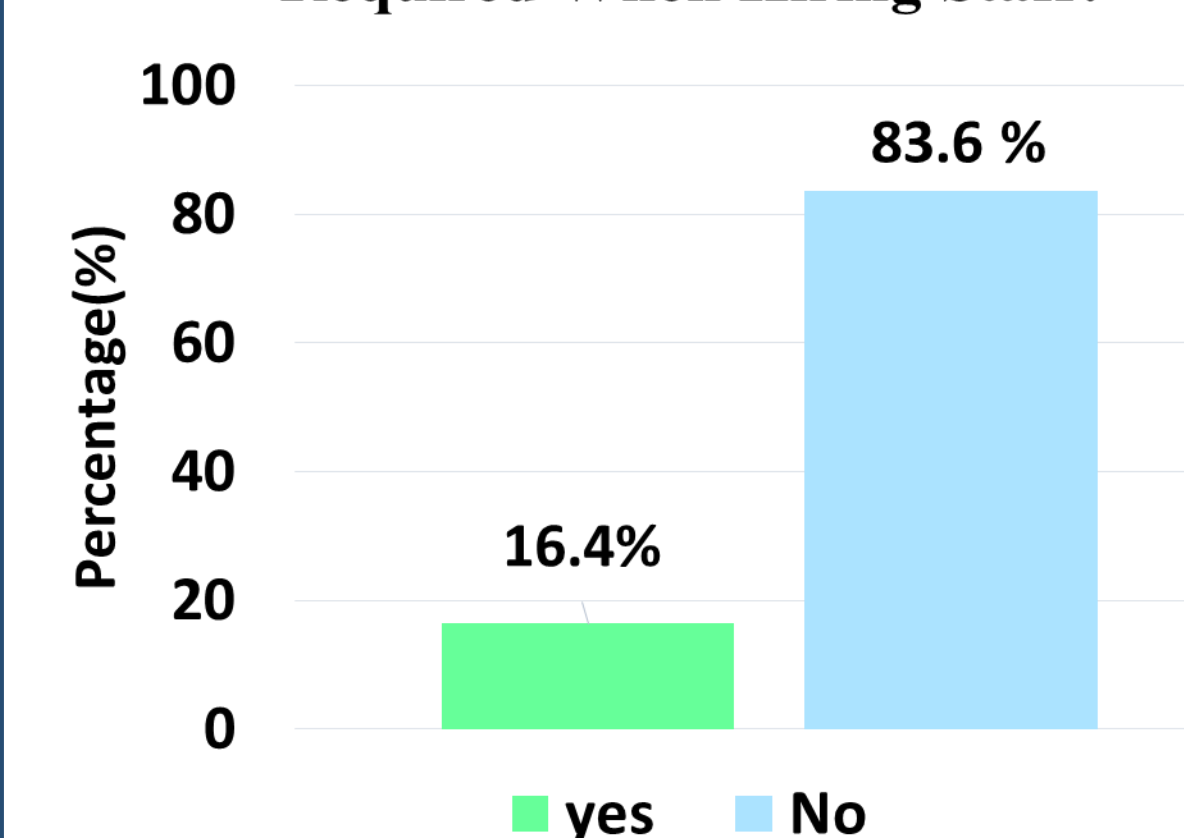
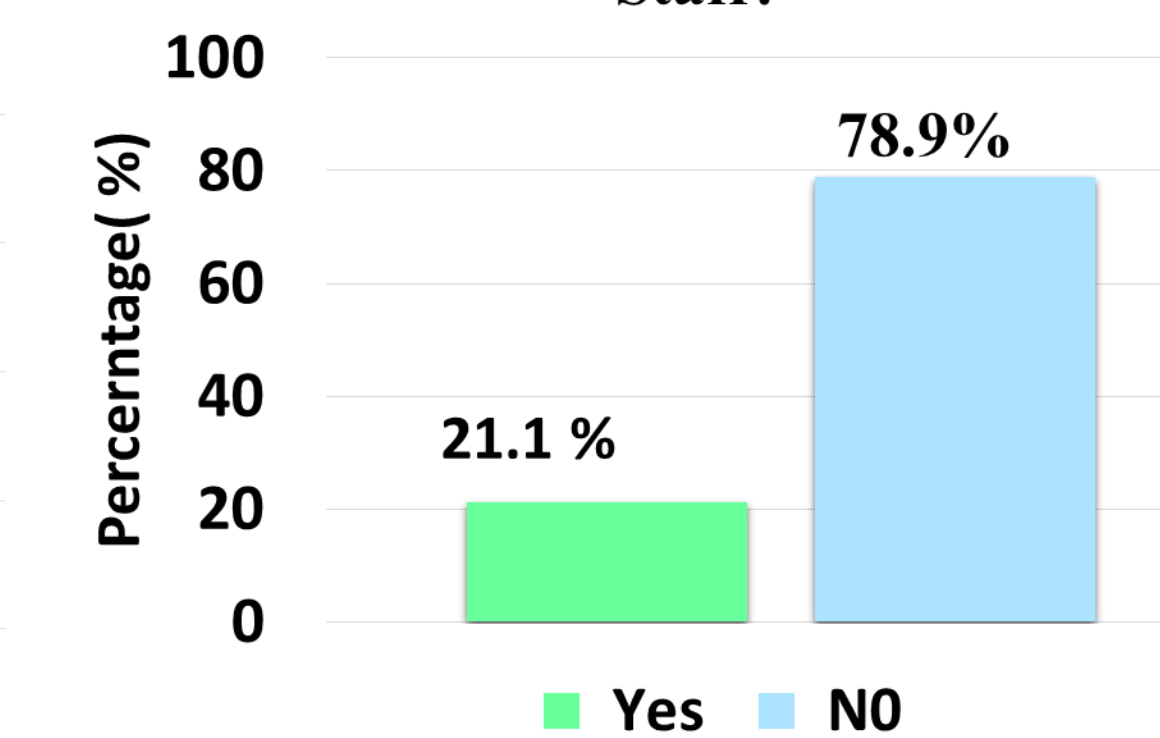
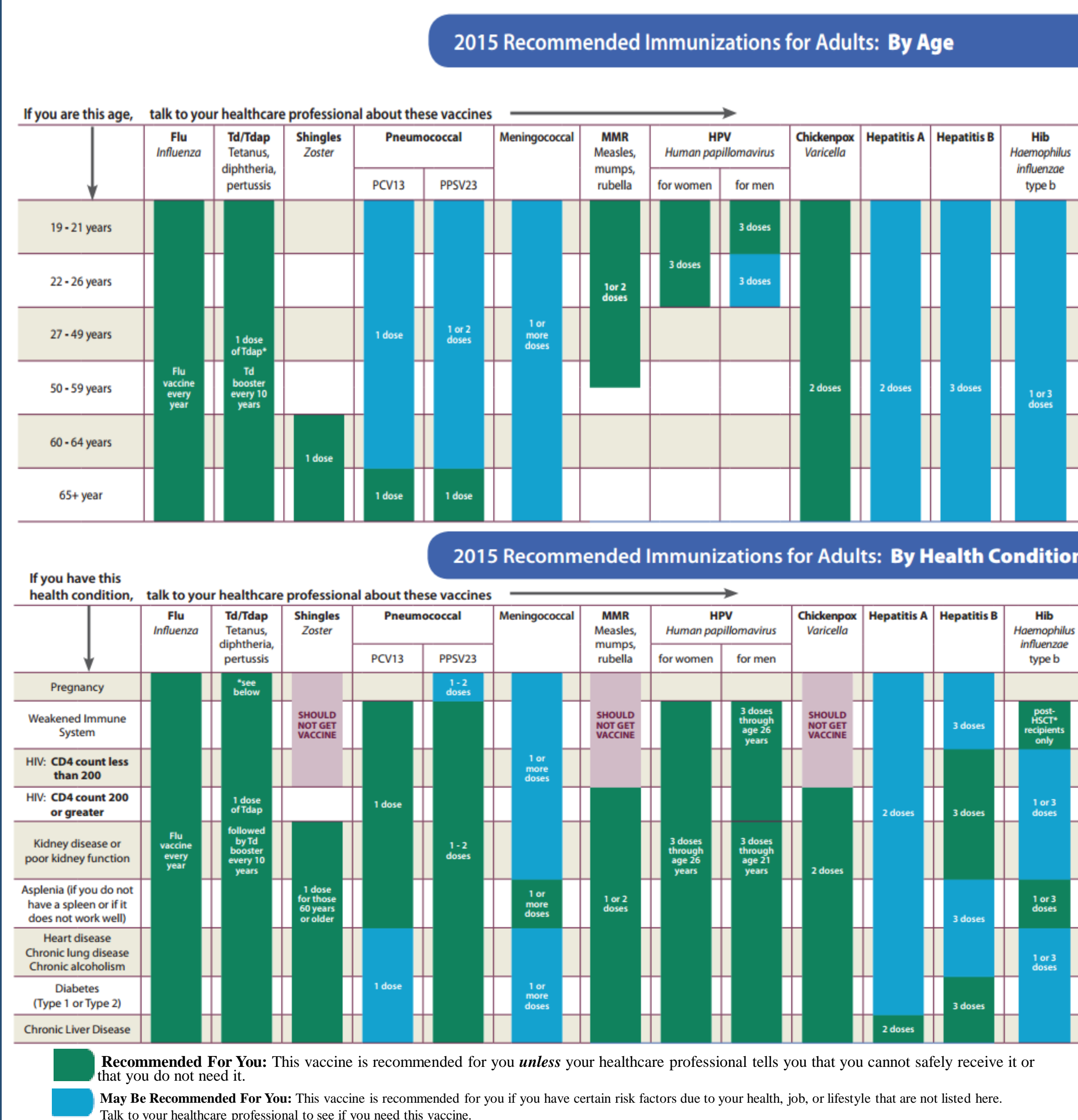


Figure 2: Do You Have Vaccination Policies in Place For Staff?



- About 84% (61/73) of daycare directors that responded reported that they do not require that potential staff members provide vaccination records when hiring and more than 16% responded that they do.
- Close to 79% (56/71) of daycare facilities within the district stated that they do not have a vaccination policy in place that recommends vaccinations or proof of vaccinations for staff members while about 21% stated that they do.
- Approximately 27% (8/30) of directors that stated that they had vaccine policies in place said they reviewed staff vaccination files every year.
- Nearly all of the respondents (93%, 68/73) stated that it is important to educate staff members about vaccinations, and 75% (54/72) stated that staff members should be required to have up-to-date vaccinations.
- Most (82%, 59/72) respondents reported that a vaccine information session would be at least somewhat beneficial, with 40% responding that such a session would be "extremely beneficial."

CDC RECOMMENDED ADULT IMMUNIZATIONS



CONCLUSION

A large portion (79%) of daycare facilities within the district do not have policies in place that require recommended vaccines for their workers, and over 83% do not require that workers provide vaccination records upon hiring. Many (37%) directors do not know how often the vaccination files of their staff members are reviewed, and the majority (75%) reported that child care workers should be required to have updated vaccinations. Lastly, over 90% think that educating their staff members about vaccines is important and find vaccination information sessions to be beneficial (82%).

Recommendations based on this study include

- Increasing awareness through dissemination of information regarding recommended adult vaccinations coupled with the required annual vaccination audits performed by Public Health.
- Encouragement of vaccination quiz provided by the CDC (<http://www2.cdc.gov/nip/adultimmsched/>)
- Development of a policy to maintain up-to-date vaccinations for daycare workers.

Such efforts are highly beneficial in protecting childcare workers and the children they care for from the communicable diseases that are prevalent in the environment in which they reside.

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