



NEWS RELEASE

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Alabama health care personnel advised to be immunized for influenza

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health, the Medical Association of the State of Alabama and the Alabama Hospital Association have issued a joint statement emphasizing the importance of health care personnel receiving influenza vaccinations.

Influenza is a serious illness that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes death. It is especially dangerous for those at high risk, including the very young, the elderly and those with other chronic health conditions and compromised immune systems.

It has been documented that health care workers can receive and transmit the flu virus to and from their patients and that annual vaccination of health care personnel is important to preventing the spread of the virus and thus ensuring a safe environment for patients.

Recently, health care providers across the nation have taken significant steps to prevent the spread of Ebola, a disease that doesn't even come close to the flu in terms of the potential for illness and death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 200,000 Americans are hospitalized each year with the flu and that the numbers of deaths due to flu have ranged from 3,000 to 49,000 annually.

Even with the recent announcement from the CDC regarding the spread of a flu strain that is not totally prevented with the current vaccine, CDC officials urge providers and their patients to continue vaccination efforts, noting that vaccination offers some protection and "might reduce the likelihood of severe outcomes such as hospitalization and death." In addition, vaccination will offer protection against circulating influenza strains that are susceptible to the vaccine.

"It's imperative that physicians and anyone involved in health care delivery receive a flu vaccination. It's impossible to predict how severe the flu season will be in Alabama this year, but we have a duty to stay as healthy as we can during the flu season. We can help mitigate the spread of the flu virus by taking this simple precaution," Ronald Franks, M.D., president of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, said.

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