Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: https://reachmd.com/programs/clinicians-roundtable/influenza-vaccination-the-key-to-reducing-hospitalizations-disease-severity/15210/

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Influenza Vaccination: The Key to Reducing Hospitalizations & Disease Severity

Announcer:
Welcome to Clinician's Roundtable on ReachMD. On this episode, sponsored by CSL Seqirus, Dr. Natalia Castillo Almeida will share strategies for reducing the burden of influenza among vulnerable patient populations. Dr. Castillo Almeida is an internal medicine specialist at Durham Outpatient Center and an Assistant Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at the University of Nebraska School of Medicine. Let's hear from her now.

Dr. Castillo Almeida:
I wanted to highlight some key data on influenza disease severity and hospitalization rates among those that are vulnerable. It's important to know that influenza surveillance does not capture all cases of influenza that occur in the U.S., so the CDC provides some preliminary data that is collected through the CDC's Influenza Hospitalization Surveillance Network, and this data may change as more reports are received. So far, 17,997 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations were reported between October 1st of 2022 and April 15th of 2023. So the overall cumulative hospitalization rate was 61.5 per 100,000 population. This in-season cumulative hospitalization rate is similar to the end-of-season hospitalization rates for other seasons, such as the 2018-2019 and the 2019-2020 season.

When you're examining rates by those who are at highest risk for hospitalization, those who are age 65 and older have a high risk for hospitalization, so about 183.4 per 100,000. And among that age group, rates are usually higher among those who are age 85 and older.

The most effective way to prevent the disease is vaccination. So, the CDC recommends that the influenza vaccine should be ideally given during September or October. The vaccine is recommended every year, starting at six months of age for those who do not have any contraindications. However, vaccinations should continue throughout the season as long as the influenza viruses are circulating.

It's also important to remember the vaccination is crucial, not only for those who are at high risk of influenza complications, but those who are living with or caring for those who are at high risk.

Among high-risk individuals, influenza vaccination may be less effective in preventing illness, but it does reduce disease severity and incidence of complications and death. So as a result, beginning with the 2022-2023 flu season, the CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices preferentially recommended the use of higher dose and adjuvanted flu vaccine for people who are 65 years and older.

Similarly, in another high-risk group as such as children, the influenza vaccine can prevent severe and life-threatening complications. So, for example, in a study published in August 2022, in Clinical Infectious Diseases, this study showed that vaccination reduced children's risk of severe life-threatening influenza by 75 percent.

You may not have decided to get the vaccine yet, but I do encourage for patients in high-risk populations to get some additional information from your healthcare providers. As healthcare providers, we can guide you to know which one would be the best vaccine for you and what will make you feel more comfortable about getting the vaccine and reducing hospitalization rates and death.

Announcer:
This episode of Clinician's Roundtable was sponsored by CSL Seqirus. To access other episodes in this series, visit ReachMD.com/Clinicians-Roundtable, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!

The content of this program was recorded in April of 2023 and the data presented is subject to change.