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December 10, 2020

Dear Clinical Practitioners,

During [National Influenza Vaccination Week](#), as you continue our 2020-2021 influenza immunization programs during this unprecedented year, the Vaccine Preventable Disease Control Program (VPDCP) at LA County Department of Public Health would like to offer continued support.

Administering influenza immunizations continues to be critical this year. Although influenza surveillance continues to show below average cases, we still are concerned about influenza outbreaks, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a clinician, your immunization recommendation is one of the most powerful tools to increase uptake of flu immunizations. Every opportunity to immunize against influenza must be used as we continue to practice physical distancing, using face coverings and pre-COVID infection control practices (hand washing, covering your cough, stay home when ill).

Why immunization against influenza is more important than ever:

1. An influenza immunization protects the recipient, their family, friends, co-workers and their general community.
2. Any protection against influenza helps. Benefits range from less severe illness to no disease at all. Each person responds differently to the immunization but some protection is better than none.
3. Influenza is a potentially lethal disease with significant medical complications, social disruption and economic hardship for an infected person, their family and their environment.
4. Co-infection with influenza and COVID-19 increases complications, hospital length of stay and mortality for your patient. Ref: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m3720>

5. Influenza is associated with future medical complications (e.g. cardiac, neurologic, kidney disease).
6. Influenza infections during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly increase disruption of an already overwhelmed healthcare system causing stress, risk and cost increases for all involved. Diagnostic testing, hospital beds, PPE and other scarce materials and services become more difficult to manage. Protection against influenza and other respiratory illness can have immeasurable community benefit. The COVID-19 surge we have now makes it very difficult for the healthcare system to handle more ill people.

If you need influenza vaccine, please use our [Prevent Flu LA](#) website to access the [2020-2021 Influenza Vaccine Administration Partner Request for Support-Planning Guide \(lacounty.gov\)](#)

These links provide detailed guidance about practice-based immunizing in the COVID-19 environment and [Testing and Treatment of 2020-2021 Seasonal Influenza During the COVID-19 Pandemic \(cdc.gov\)](#)

[COVID-19: An ACP Physician's Guide & Resources | ACP \(acponline.org\)](#)

[Clinical Guidance \(aap.org\)](#)

[COVID-19 \(aafp.org\)](#)

Now is the time to promote influenza immunization as best you can in this COVID-19 pandemic environment.

Please contact us if additional information will be helpful. Thank you for your commitment to your patients and their well-being.

Sincerely,

Franklin D. Pratt, MD, MPHTM, FACEP

FDP;mh