

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Health Department
2004-2005 Flu Report

Introduction

In the Summer of 2004, the Immunization Staff located, in the Public Health and Environmental Protection Division, developed the annual flu response plan. This plan includes ordering vaccine, scheduling 30 clinics, usually at community and senior centers, scheduling staffing for the clinics and developing advertising materials to inform the public of the availability of the vaccine. The majority of vaccine is distributed to San Mateo County residents through a network of private and public physicians and clinics. Most people get flu shots from their private physicians, through their HMO or clinic where the patient gets his or her primary medical care. Others get flu shots at other sites such as Visiting Nurses Association, pharmacies or senior centers. Normally, about 5% of the total flu vaccine is distributed by the Health Department.

Private and community providers order vaccine through various distributors, but those distributors acquire the vaccine from one of the two approved manufacturers of vaccine for the United States. Vaccine is acquired from the manufacturers through advance ordering. Publicly-funded vaccine is distributed by the Health Department at a variety of senior centers. The Health Department role in the annual vaccine campaign is to provide education in the community, to promote flu vaccines and to plan targeted clinics at community or senior centers.

Flu vaccine is usually recommended for those 60 years of age or older and for those with a chronic condition or compromised immunization system.

Discussion

In 2004 there were only two manufacturers of vaccine for the United States. On October 5, 2004, Chiron Corporation, the major manufacturer for vaccines ordered in San Mateo County, notified the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency in the United Kingdom suspended the company's license to manufacture influenza vaccine in its Liverpool facility for three months. This suspension resulted in no vaccine being shipped to the United States. Almost all San Mateo County vaccine had been ordered from distributors purchasing from Chiron.

On October 8, 2004, Dr. Scott Morrow, San Mateo County Health Officer, declared a Local Emergency in San Mateo County and issued an order to all medical providers to cease giving influenza vaccine to non-high risk individuals. That action was subsequently ratified by the County Manager and then the Board of Supervisors.

During the week of October 11, 2004, a survey of medical providers in the County was initiated to determine the unmet need for vaccination of their high-

risk population. The surveys were followed up by fax and phone to ensure the information was received. The State was able to provide additional vaccine but needed to insure that it went to the highest risk populations.

The County Health Officer then met with the medical community to develop the county's influenza vaccine distribution plan. Since the shortage of vaccine would clearly result in rationing what vaccine was available, it was important to do so by the most efficient and ethical means possible. It was certain that there would be insufficient vaccine for the whole county, the goal of the distribution plan was to assure that the vaccine was received by those who needed it the most. The plan was reviewed by the ethics committee of the San Mateo Medical Society and approved by its board. The plan for distribution was designed to reach those likely to become gravely ill or to die from the flu. The distribution plan relied on the community's network of physicians to prioritize among their patients and to assure that the most vulnerable received flu shots as the vaccine became available. The Health Department also surveyed the community to assure that residents of nursing homes, assisted living and other group home settings were vaccinated. That population is usually too frail or otherwise unable to wait in line at a public clinic.

A five-phase approach was developed. In the first phase, physicians who ordered vaccine from Chrion received the initial 3,500 doses and these recipients were directed to prioritize within the high-risk groups. The second phase provided vaccine to skilled nursing facilities. By the time the third phase began, the limitations to the high-risk populations had been removed and the Health Department was able to provide additional public clinics for 2,570 adults who had not been vaccinated. The State and CDC requested that the local health departments continue to broker the ordering of vaccine and phases four and five were implemented to allow private providers to continue ordering and expand the populations vaccinated.

Concurrent with the survey, a request was also made for any unused vaccine to be given to the Health Department for redistribution to those most in need. Nine providers responded to this request, resulting in an additional 1,480 vaccine available for redistribution. Of these nine, three providers went as far as donating their vaccine back to us. These providers are herein acknowledged for their generous contribution and concern for the overall public health of our community. The list of providers has been attached hereto as Attachment 1.

As a result of the public concern due to the lack of vaccine, the Health Department operated in a disaster response mode and opened the phone queue (call center) system for increased communication with the public. In the middle of October, it became apparent that additional staffing resources were needed to address this issue. The response went from a "Small Scale Response" to "Medium Scale" allowing resources from the entire Health Department to assist. The disaster response plans had been recently updated as a result of

bioterrorism preparedness and this event allowed us to test these methods. Overall the plans worked well and a debriefing session was held with the assistance of the Office of Emergency Services to make slight adjustments for the future.

The phone queue, a call system designed to handle high volume of calls, was staffed with individuals from all divisions within the Health Department and took 3,851 calls from October 8, 2004 through January 9, 2005. During this same time, the website was also instrumental in providing information to the public and the number of visits to the flu information page totaled 5,963. A recorded hotline was also established and that system logged 9,086 calls. A graph displaying these contacts has been attached hereto as Attachment 2.

In the final analysis, the County distributed some 20,000 doses of vaccine to County residents through the Health Department. We are fortunate that the flu illnesses in San Mateo County were moderate. The local medical system was stretched a great deal in the distribution effort, but spared of the crisis that could have been had the season been as severe as in prior years.

The success of the revised flu response could not have occurred without the dedication of staff from the entire Health Department as well as the county as a whole. While the emergency preparedness plan needed to be adjusted to meet the situation, everyone rose to the occasion and ensured basic health and safety for all.

Fiscal Impact

The County response to the flu vaccine shortage cost \$142,312. The expenses were \$168,872, which was offset with \$26,504 of reimbursement for the vaccine. Most of the expenses were covered by the Public Health Division's operating budget, and the rest were covered by the budgets of the other Health Department divisions that reassigned staff to the effort.

Attachment 1

Mary Housley, R.N.
Sutter VNA & Hospice
700 S. Claremont
San Mateo, CA 94402
Sold: 200 doses

Abunto-Tolentino Pediatrics, Inc.
1001 Sneath Lane, Suite 104
San Bruno, CA 94066
Sold: 50 doses

Arnold Leary
Jeannette Hanni
Mills-Peninsula Medical Center
1783 El Camino Real
Burlingame, CA 94010
Donated: 260 doses

Tung & Virmani Medical Group
431 Burgess Drive, Suite 110
Menlo Park, CA 94025
Sold: 40 doses

Laurie Rubinstein, M.D.
KidKare Association
595 Price Avenue, Suite E
Redwood City, CA 94062
Sold: 200 doses

Peninsula Pediatric Medical Group
1720 El Camino Real
Burlingame, CA
Sold: 200 doses

David Burris, Pharmacist
Palo Alto Medical Foundation
795 El Camino Real
Palo Alto, CA
Sold: 500 doses

Bruce Maltz, M.D.
Allura Skin and Laser Center
101 South San Mateo Drive, # 200
San Mateo, CA
Donated: 20 doses

Stuart Katz, M.D.
Physician Surgery Center
901 Campus Drive
Daly City, CA
Donated: 10 Doses

Flu Information Activity - Hotline* / Queue / Flu Related Web Visits
October 8, 2004 - January 9, 2005
 (*Hotline data updated weekly)

