



MEMORANDUM

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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September 11, 2020

TO: MSSNY Council

FROM: MSSNY Emergency Preparedness and Disaster/Terrorism Response Planning Committee

SUBJECT: Influenza Vaccination for School-Aged Children

The MSSNY Emergency Preparedness and Disaster/Terrorism Response Committee met on September 10, 2020 and discussed the need to support the requirement that school-aged children having the influenza immunization prior to them attending school. This matter came before the planning committee because the New York State Association of County Health Officials has formally requested MSSNY support such requirement and seeks to request that the Governor provide an emergency order for mandatory flu vaccine. The EP planning committee thought this was an important component considering the current pandemic.

The planning committee noted that NYC does have a requirement for children 6 months through 59 months of age enrolled Head Start, Nursery, or Pre-K programs to receive one dose of influenza vaccine between July 1st and December 31st of each year. This requirement has already withstood court challenges, and the US Supreme Court refused to hear the case which was brought by parents and came long before the COVID 19 pandemic. NYS does not have a law or regulation to this effect.

As the EP planning committee was discussing this matter, the following statement was made today in the press by Commissioner Howard Zucker: <https://www.wxnews.org/post/new-york-considering-mandatory-flu-vaccine-students> Dr. Zucker stated that the Department of Health was looking at this issue and will be making a recommendation to the Governor shortly.

The state of Massachusetts recently implemented a similar rule in the state. The Massachusetts requirement requires immunization for all children 6 months of age or older who are attending Massachusetts childcare, pre-school, kindergarten, K-12, and colleges and universities.

The EP Planning Committee also reached out and obtained support of the MSSNY Infectious Disease Committee and Heart, Lung Cancer Committee for this resolution. It is important to note that at its May 6, 2020 meeting of the Heart, Lung Cancer Committee that committee members had already agreed to support this requirement.

Therefore, the MSSNY Emergency Preparedness Planning Committee, the MSSNY Infectious Disease and Heart, Lung Cancer Committees requests that the following resolution be approved by the MSSNY Council:

Resolution:

“MSSNY Supports the Requirement that School Age Children Receive the Influenza Vaccine”

Whereas, children have the highest influenza attack rates of any subpopulation; and

Whereas, for individual and the public health, the primary goal of mandatory vaccination programs is to prevent patients at higher risk of complications from becoming infected; and

Whereas, Influenza affects infants and the elderly most severely, and

Whereas, the childhood immature immune system results in younger people having a longer, more complicated course of influenza illness. This is because so-called naïve immune system in children (i.e., the immune system that has not been previously or frequently exposed to various pathogens) does not mount the same robust immune response seen in people ages 25-49; and

Whereas, recent studies show that children frequently introduce influenza in households, and that schools act as a conduit for infection transmission in communities; and

Whereas, vaccination of children better promotes herd immunity and protects elderly populations who are at highest risk of serious complications of influenza; and

Whereas, widespread vaccination of children recognizes that infection spread occurs most often in the community (>90%) rather than in hospitals or in closed populations (e.g., nursing homes); and

Whereas, vaccine options include intranasal vaccine that is most effective in children and avoids concerns of injection site reactions and needle-phobia; and

Whereas, New York City has a requirement for children 6 months through 59 months of age enrolled Head Start, Nursery, or Pre-K programs to receive one dose of influenza vaccine between July 1st and December 31st of each year; and

Whereas, the state of Massachusetts influenza immunization will be required for all children 6 months of age or older who are attending child care, pre-school, kindergarten, K-12 and colleges and universities; and

Whereas, that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, that immunizing school-age children with the influenza vaccine is an important public health step; now therefore be it,

RESOLVED, that the Medical Society of the State of New York support a requirement for administration of the influenza vaccine for all school-age children who attend childcare, pre-kindergarten, K-12 and college and universities in New York State, unless medically contraindicated.

References:

Bambery B et al. The Case for Mandatory Flu Vaccination for Children. American J Bioethics 2013; 13: 38-57.

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Huong Q Mclean, PhD, MPH et al. Association of Prior Vaccination with Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness in Children Receiving Live Attenuated or Inactivated Vaccine. JAMA 2018

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Guenther Fink, Nina Orlova-Fink et al. Inactivated trivalent influenza vaccine is associated with lower mortality among Covid-19 patients in Brazil.

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(FOR MSSNY COUNCIL ACTION)