



We're all about children!

Press Release

Overimmunization Rate High Among Hispanic Children

May 5, 2003

Contact: Ellen Bank 843-792-2626

CHARLESTON, SC -- In the United States, Hispanic children are more likely to be over-vaccinated than white or black children according to a study by pediatricians from the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and the Mayo Clinic.

Paul Darden, M.D., professor of pediatrics at MUSC, will present results of a study he conducted with Robert Jacobson, M.D., of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. at the annual meeting of Pediatric Academic Societies being held in Seattle May 3 -6.

"Vaccines are effective and cost-effective. Vaccines have had more beneficial effects on the health of children than anything else doctors do," said Darden. "But we want to do enough ? not too much."

The researchers looked at the public use files of the 1999 National Immunization Survey, a national, validated survey of the immunization status of children from 19 to 35 months of age. They looked at how likely different racial groups were to receive more vaccines than recommended. The races examined were white, black, Hispanic and others. The overall rate of overvaccination was 6%.

Minority children were almost a third more likely to be overimmunized than were white children. Black children, despite being more likely to be not being up to date with all immunizations were no more or less likely to be overvaccinated than were white children. Hispanic children were 50% more likely to be overimmunized than were white children. The overimmunization for Hispanic children seemed to be a result of language and communication problems. They, in fact, found the people most likely to be overvaccinated were those who filled out the survey in Spanish and those who received immunizations from multiple providers.

"A child receiving too many vaccines is not likely to have their health suffer," said Darden, "but there is always the possibility of a bad events such as an allergic reaction to the immunization. The consequences are not profound, but we prefer to give the right amount of vaccines rather than expose a child to risk, albeit a small risk, for no additional benefit."

There is also an unnecessary cost involved in overvaccination - both the cost of delivering the immunization, and the cost to the parent related to getting the child to the vaccination site, such as transportation and time off from work.

While the rates of overvaccination for Hispanic children exceeds that of other children, the problem does exist for all children. Families change providers, physicians retire or go out of business. The solution, according to Darden, lies in having a regional immunization registry. All states are working on immunization registries but most only cover a small proportion of children. In South Carolina, for example, there is a registry, but most vaccinations included are those given by the health department most provided in doctor's offices are not included. He envisions a statewide registry that when a child is born, he or she would be entered in the registry and any immunization given from any source would immediately be entered into the central database.

Given the fact that this type of registry does not exist in South Carolina and in most states at this time, Darden recommends that parents keep careful written records of their children's vaccinations. Immunization schedules change, and it is important that future health care providers know what immunizations have been given. Most people will have to produce records, whether upon entering schools or the military, and good record keeping will avoid unnecessary duplication of vaccinations.

#####

www.musckids.com
171 Ashley Ave. Charleston, SC 29425 • 843-792-1414 • 800-424-MUSC
© 2006 MUSC Children's Hospital