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PS#66, 2006 - Pediatricians' Attitudes and Practices Surrounding the Delivery of Immunizations

(Part 3) – Vaccine Financing Issues

This survey was initiated by the former Committee on Community Health Services to explore issues surrounding immunizations, including opinion on adequacy of vaccine and administration cost reimbursement levels and related financing issues. The survey was developed in cooperation with the National Immunization Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and findings will assist the AAP/CDC Childhood Immunization Support Program (CISP) in evaluating and promoting national immunization practices. PS#66 was funded by the DHHS, CDC, National Immunization Program as part of the CISP grant, #U66/CCU524285.

PS#66 also included questions on attitudes toward universal influenza immunization, practices regarding recently recommended vaccines, attitudes and practices regarding pediatricians' communication and documentation of vaccine risks/benefits, and satisfaction with the Academy as an information source on immunizations; these findings are reported in separate Executive Summaries. Selected findings from PS#66 were presented at the 2007 annual meeting of the Pediatric Academic Societies.

PS#66 was mailed to a random sample of 1620 non-retired U.S. members of the Academy. An original mailing and six follow-up mailings to recontact nonrespondents were conducted from July through November 2006; 852 questionnaires were received for a response rate of 53%. Analysis for the following topics was limited to 545 post-residency pediatricians who provide patient care and offer age-appropriate immunizations to all or some of the children in their practice.

**Estimates of Patients' Immunization Coverage:**

*Among pediatricians who know how patients' immunizations are covered (76% of pediatricians).*

- Pediatricians report 38% of patients are fully covered for immunization by either private or public health insurance plans, 32% are covered by the VFC, 24% are partially covered by private insurance, and 6% have either no health insurance or no coverage benefits for immunizations.
- About equal proportions of pediatricians report an increase and report no change in the proportion of patients covered by the VFC program in the past five years: 47.3% say it has increased, and 46.3% say it has remained about the same, while only 6.3% say it has decreased.

**Providing Immunizations for Patients with No Insurance Coverage for Vaccines or High Co-pay/Deductible:**

- Two-thirds of pediatricians (66%) say they would always provide immunizations through VFC or other publicly purchased programs for children with no health insurance coverage for vaccines or a high co-pay/deductible; 17% would sometimes do so.
- About 3 out of 10 pediatricians each would always or sometimes refer patients with no insurance coverage or high co-pay/deductibles to a public health clinic for immunizations (32% always, 31% sometimes).

**Adequacy of Reimbursement:**

- About 4 out of 10 pediatricians say vaccine reimbursement from both private (39%) and public (35%) insurers is adequate.
- About 3 out of 10 pediatricians say reimbursement from both private (33%) and public (27%) insurers for vaccine administration costs is adequate.
- More than one-half of pediatricians (55%) say VFC reimbursement for vaccines is adequate while only 39% say reimbursement for VFC administration costs is adequate.
- Pediatricians in solo or 2-physician practices are less likely than pediatricians in group or hospital/clinic practices to think either private or public health insurance reimbursement for vaccines or administration costs are adequate ( $p < .05$ ).
  - *There were no significant differences in perception of adequacy of reimbursement by other measured practice characteristics: age, gender, practice location, pediatrician or patient race/ethnicity, number of patients visits per week, or patient insurance source.*

**Likelihood of Offering Vaccines With Less than Full Reimbursement‡:**

- Seventeen percent of pediatricians say they are very likely and 21% say they are somewhat likely to give a vaccine if the purchase price is greater than the insurance reimbursement for that vaccine (excluding payment of vaccine administration).
- About one-third of pediatricians (34%) are very likely and 29% are somewhat likely to forego the administration fee when giving a VFC vaccine to an uninsured or underinsured child, rather than refer the child to a public clinic or community health center.
- Pediatricians in solo-2/physician practices are less likely than those in group or hospital/clinic practices to offer a vaccine if costs exceed reimbursement (OR 0.26, CI 0.115-0.607,  $p < .01$ ) or forego an administration fee for a VFC vaccine (OR 0.22, CI 0.096-0.507,  $p < .001$ ).
  - *No other physician characteristic (pediatrician age, gender, practice location, number of patient visits per week or patient insurance source) was associated with likelihood of offering vaccines.*

‡ *This question was replicated with permission from the Vaccine Policy Collaborative Initiative, a sentinel network of primary care pediatricians developed by researchers at Colorado Health Outcomes Program, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, Denver, CO, and the CDC to collect data via Web-based surveys focused on immunization issues.*