

Childhood Immunizations: Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions of Northwest American Indian/Alaska Native Community Members

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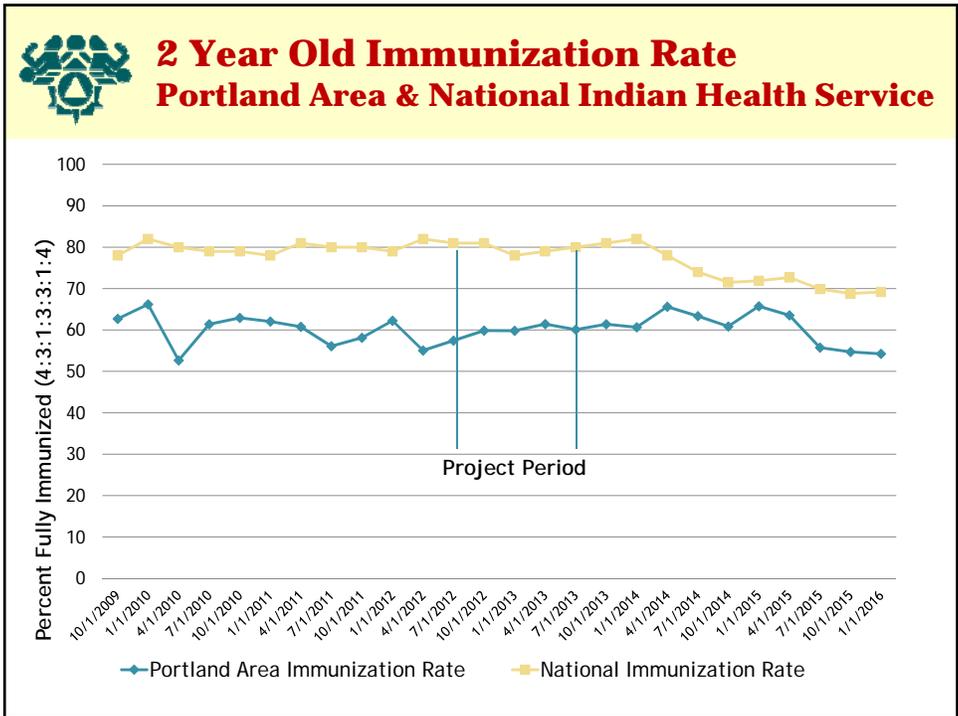
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Background

- Childhood immunizations are one of the most effective clinical prevention interventions
- Effective immunization services in the US account for the eradication of polio, the elimination of measles and the elimination of rubella and congenital rubella syndrome in the US
- In 2012-2013, influenza vaccination averted 79,000 hospitalization, 6.6 million cases and 3.2 million medically attended cases of influenza*

*MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2013 Dec 13;62(49):997-1000



Questions

- Are NW AI/AN communities hesitant or resistant to immunizations like many non-AI/AN communities in the NW?
- What are the influences that serve as barriers or facilitators to immunizations?



Methods

- Focus groups with community members from AI/AN communities in OR and WA
- 6 questions to prompt discussion of local sentiments regarding vaccines
- Analysis software: Atlas Ti v7



Results

- 3 focus groups— 1 (OR), 2 (WA), N=36 total participants
 - Primarily younger parents
 - Small number of older parents/grandparents
 - At least one healthcare provider (nurse, nursing assistant or medical assistant) who was also a tribal member.



Focus Group Questions

- What do you think about childhood immunizations?
- Where do community members get information about immunizations? Is this information given in ways that people can easily understand?
- What do elders in the community say about immunizations and the diseases they prevent?
- What do young parents say about immunizations and the diseases they prevent?
- Do community members express doubt or distrust about the safety or efficacy of vaccines?
- What strengths do you see in the community that can help to address the problem of low childhood IZ rates?



Focus Group Barriers

- Concerns about vaccines
- Clinic barriers
- Mistrust of medical establishment, government
- Family and community influences



Focus Group Barriers

- Concerns about vaccines:
 - *"The cure is going to kill you."*
 - *"[The list of] side effects is longer than [the consequences of] getting the disease."*
 - *"If you're just gonna get sick, why get the shot?"*
- Clinic barriers:
 - *"I think if the clinic had better services everybody would be more [apt] to get their kids immunized. I think I would."*



Focus Group Barriers

- Mistrust of medical establishment, government
 - *"Sometimes I think it's a scare tactic, the government is trying to scare us into doing all this stuff when they don't even know if it works."*
- Family and community influences
 - *"But my grandparents [saw] the mass graves where the small pox people are buried, they won't have anything to do with it."*



Focus Group Facilitators

- Supportive clinic environment
 - *"I'd have to say my doctor's pretty good...She puts it pretty straight and easy to understand. Whenever I have a question she's more than willing to answer it."*
 - Providers with time/ability to educate in plain language
 - Having pediatricians was perceived as increasing confidence and acceptance of immunizations
- Provide information
 - Making information understandable
 - Advertising, newsletters, handouts



Conclusions

- Adequate patient education about immunizations was identified as an important concern of NW AI/AN community members.
- Fear of vaccines (ingredients, side effects) and mistrust of government and pharmaceutical companies was an important concern
- Improving patient and provider education regarding immunizations is needed



Limitations

- Focus groups in only 3 communities, may not be representative of all NW communities
- Some focus groups included HCW from the clinic, which may have introduced bias
- None of the focus groups was from a Tribe served directly by IHS



Next Steps

- Develop patient education tools endorsed by Tribes and Tribal organizations trusted by community members
- Develop healthcare provider education tools to help providers talk to patients more effectively
- Assemble a broad coalition of partners to develop an Area-wide Strategic Plan to improve childhood immunizations





Thank You!

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