



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Medical Center
2300 Ramsey Street
Fayetteville, NC 28301

In Reply Refer To: 565/00

A message to All Employees regarding the FY 2013- FY 2014 Influenza Immunization

As the President of your local union, AFGE Local 1738, and your Medical Center Director, we encourage you to get the flu vaccine. Influenza, or the flu, is a contagious and potentially deadly infection for staff, family members and our Veteran patients. We care for a population of frail elderly, hospice, immunosuppressed, and homeless Veterans who are highly susceptible to the flu.

It is estimated about 5-20% of adults become infected with the flu annually. 200,000 are hospitalized every year for complications associated with the flu. Deaths related to flu over the last 30 years range from 3,000 – 49,000 annually.

The flu is spread from person to person by droplets from coughing or sneezing and transmission occurs through direct and indirect contact. Individuals are contagious at least one day before any signs or symptoms of the flu appear and up to 5 to 7 days after they become sick. During this time they can infect patients and other staff.

The best way to prevent the spread of the flu and its complications is annual vaccination.

In recent years, the employee immunization rate across VISN 6 facilities ranged from 26-66% with a goal of 85%. The Joint Commission has recently set a graduated goal to increase to 90% by 2020 with improvement each year and to measure reasons for declining to plan education to continue improvement.

The evidence of the effectiveness and safety of the flu vaccine is clear. We are joining together to strongly encourage all employees to complete the influenza immunization form and **GET IMMUNIZED** during the coming flu season. Although this is not a mandate, it is the right thing to do for you, your family, our fellow staff members and our Veteran patients.

Handwritten signature of Deborah Dantzler in cursive.

DEBORAH DANTZLER, RN
Vice President AFGE, Local 1738

Handwritten signature of Elizabeth Goolsby in cursive.

ELIZABETH GOOLSBY
Director, Fayetteville VA Medical Center

Attachment
Myths About the Flu Vaccine

Myths About the Flu Vaccine

Myth: The flu vaccine can cause the flu.

Reality: The injectable flu vaccine does not contain the live flu virus so it is impossible to get the flu from the vaccine. The nasal spray flu vaccine contains live, attenuated (weakened) viruses that can cause mild signs or symptoms. It cannot cause the flu infection.

Myth: I get sick every time I get the flu vaccine.

Reality: Side effects may occur in some people, such as a mild soreness, redness at injection site, swelling at injection site, headache, or low grade fever.

Myth: The flu shot doesn't work.

Reality: The flu vaccine will prevent the flu about 70 – 90% of the time depending on how well the circulating viruses match those in the vaccine.

Myth: Our staff washes their hands, use gloves and a mask so the vaccine is not needed.

Reality: The flu is spread by respiratory droplets generated when talking, coughing or sneezing. Adults shed the flu virus at least one day before any signs or symptoms of the disease, so health care personnel can unknowingly infect patients and other staff.

Myth: Our staff stays home if they are sick, so the vaccination is not needed.

Reality: Since unvaccinated individuals are contagious at least one day before any signs or symptoms of the flu appear, they can shed the virus and infect patients and other staff.

Myth: The flu vaccination for staff is very expensive.

Reality: The Department of Veterans Affairs provides the immunization to staff free of charge.