SPN Position Statement: 
Immunizations

INTRODUCTION/PROBLEM STATEMENT

Before vaccines were developed, serious communicable diseases struck hundreds of thousands of people in the United States (U.S.); killing thousands every year. Today, because vaccines are widely used, most of these diseases are almost eliminated from the U.S. (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018). For over 50 years, immunizations have proven to be safe and effective in preventing communicable disease by reducing “the number of vaccine-preventable disease by more than 90%” (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018, para 1). Not only do immunizations protect the individual by providing immunity, but they also protect others around them who are not immune.

RATIONALE AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In 1921, 15,000 people in the U.S. died from diphtheria. Between 1963 and 1964, 12.5 million people contracted rubella, resulting in 2,000 infant deaths and 11,000 miscarriages. At the same time, almost all Americans became infected with measles, and hundreds died (CDC, 2018).

After the development and inception of vaccine programs starting in the 1960’s, incidences of these common diseases dropped dramatically. Polio was eradicated in the U.S. in 1979, while smallpox was eradicated worldwide in 1980 (CDC, 2016; CDC 2017b). Between 2004 and 2014 there were only two cases of diphtheria and since 2012, only 15 cases of rubella have been reported.

While vaccines have been successful, a significant threat of vaccine-preventable diseases and their effects remains. Communicable diseases are spread by contact from person to person. If a person gets a disease, he or she can spread it to a person who is not immune. However, a person who has been vaccinated cannot get that disease and cannot spread it to others. If more people are vaccinated, less people are at risk of illness and spreading disease. The CDC reports that as few as one or two cases of a disease in a community where most people are not vaccinated can result in an outbreak (CDC, 2018). An unvaccinated person is six times more likely to get pertussis and 22 times more likely to contract measles than a vaccinated person (Colorado Children’s Immunization Coalition, n.d.). Thus, if U.S. national vaccine rates drop, diseases that are almost non-existent will make a resurgence leading to epidemics.

Recent U.S. outbreaks of diseases that have previously been rare because of immunizations have emerged in areas where vaccinations have dropped to low levels. Currently, over a million children die every year from pneumococcal and rotavirus diseases (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014; 2016). In 2000, measles was declared eliminated in the U.S.; however, from 2001-2015 outbreaks not only occurred, they also doubled in frequency. There were 2,000 measles cases from 2001 to 2015; 70% of the people who contracted measles were unvaccinated. Of those cases, only 535 were imported from other countries (Clemmons, Wallace, & Patel, 2017; Mole, 2017). The largest pertussis outbreak since 1955 occurred in 2012, but continued outbreaks continue due to unvaccinated populations and waning immunity. In 2015 there were almost 21,000 cases of pertussis in the U.S. (CDC, 2017a).

In addition to the outbreaks in the U.S., many of these diseases are still prevalent in countries around the
world. Polio, measles, and pertussis can still be found in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific (CDC, 2018; The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, n.d.).

Immunizations are safe and effective in promoting health and preventing disease. Immunizations prevent 2-3 million deaths per year and are one of the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions (WHO, 2018).

POSITION and/or RECOMMENDATIONS

The Society of Pediatric Nurses endorses the Standards for Pediatric Immunization Practices recommended by the National Vaccine Advisory Committee and approved by the United States Public Health Services. The Society affirms to do the following:

• Improve immunization delivery practices in community and office-based care settings.
• Empower healthcare professionals to communicate effectively with parents about vaccines.
• Inform patients, parents, and/or legal guardians about the benefits of vaccines in preventing diseases in individuals and in the community and about the risks of those vaccines.
• Advocate for patient and family-centered teaching that addresses parent concerns about anti-vaccination ideas.
• Protect children and adolescents from vaccine preventable diseases by raising parental awareness of the critical need for timely immunizations.
• Advocate the need to develop immunization education and training material and courses.
• Promote the provision of culturally effective health care to pediatric patients.
• Advocate the establishment of a national network of immunization health care professionals promoting uniform implementation of best immunization practices within a medical home.
• Support the Standards of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

REFERENCES


from https://arstechnica.com/science/2017/07/study-us-is-slipping-toward-measles-being-endemic-once-again/


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