



**2009**  
**Staff Influenza Program**  
**Report**

Written by  
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In March 2009 the WA General Practice Network - Immunisation Program offered all WA Divisions of General practice a pilot '2009 Staff Influenza Program'.

This program was designed to offer all Division / Network staff in Western Australia a "FREE" influenza vaccine this year.

The program was supported financially by CSL Biotherapies. CSL provided all the vaccine free of charge and covered all costs associated with the distribution of the vaccines.

The following documents were prepared by WAGPN to compliment the program:

- Program introduction letter;
- Program registration form;
- Vaccine order form;
- Pre-vaccination assessment form;
- Consent form;
- Evaluation / survey.

Program statistics:

Number of staff employed by WA Divisions / Networks (at the time of the program registration)	399
Number of vaccines ordered	217
* Approximate cost of vaccine	\$ 4340
* Approximate cost of vaccine delivery	not available
Percentage of staff vaccinated	54%
<i>Vaccine uptake - varied from 18% to 84% with an average= 66%</i>	
Number of surveys returned	127
Percentage of surveys returned	32%

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Please note:

The Yes / No percentage indicates the percentage of responses received.  
Not all questions were answered on returned surveys.

- |   |          |         |
|---|----------|---------|
| 1. Did you have an influenza vaccination during 2009?   | Yes 80%  | No 20 % |
| If yes:   |          |         |
| – Did you have a free vaccination as a part of this program?  | Yes 74%  | No 7%   |
| – Did you have a free vaccination as a part of a Hospital / Community Health - Healthcare Worker vaccination program?   | Yes 6%   | No 27%  |
| – Did you pay for your vaccination through your GP?   | Yes 3%   | No 35%  |
| – Other: (please specify)   |          |         |
| If no:  |          |         |
| – Did you have the opportunity to review information provided to you to make an informed decision?  | Yes 15%  | No 3%   |
| – Do you conscientiously object to Influenza vaccination?   | Yes 6%   | No 10%  |
| – Do you have a medical condition that prohibits you from having an influenza vaccination?  | Yes 8 %  | No 17%  |
| – Other: (please specify)   |          |         |
| • Was on maternity leave  |          |         |
| 2. Have you had an influenza vaccination in previous years?   | Yes 65%  | No 34%  |
| 3. Would the timing of the staff vaccine clinic influence your decision to have the flu vaccine? (i.e. Flu vaccine given as early as possible in the season)              | Yes 56%  | No 43%  |
| 4. Would you have the flu vaccine next year if provided “free” at your work place?  | Yes 87%  | No 11%  |
| If no please specify:   |          |         |
| • I would have preferred a maybe. I will have the flu vac if I feel I will fall into an ‘at risk’ category. Probably only if I have been unwell at all during the summer. |          |         |
| • Would prefer it as early as possible.   |          |         |
| • I am not susceptible to flu (touch wood), I would consider it if I regularly got the flu.   |          |         |
| • I tried to avoid vaccination if possible - I try to live healthy and I don’t get sick very often.   |          |         |
| • Nasty experience with my first influenza vaccine made me vow and declare never to have another.   |          |         |
| • No - Conscientiously object!  |          |         |
| • Not something I see myself needing at this point.   |          |         |
| 5. Did you have any side effects from the flu vaccine?  | Yes 20 % | No 55%  |
| If yes: would this influence your decision to have the flu vaccine again and what reaction did you have? (Please Specify)   | N/A 16%  |         |

- Minor symptoms, but I would still have the vaccine.
- Just a swollen arm around the area.
- Reaction - localised swelling and discomfort. This will not influence my decision to have it again.
- Sore arm for a few days, will not put me off having vaccine.
- Soreness in the arm for 3 days - would still have it next year.
- I have had the vaccine twice and both times I experienced a sore arm for a week after the vaccine and a purple / red bruise on the injection site that lasts about 3-4 weeks after the vaccine.
- Was ill for about two weeks. Not sure if it was related, but scared me enough to make me think twice about having another.
- Just ached and a bit snuffly. I would still have the vaccine again.
- No it would deter me from having the vaccine again.
- Reaction included headache, neck and shoulder muscular pain.
- Cold like symptoms - it could have just been 'bad timing'. Will try it one more time.
- Mild flu symptoms.
- Worst flu ever. (did not have vaccine this year)
- Slight sore arm would not influence me to have the vaccine.

6. Do you feel that it is important for staff to have the flu vaccine annually? Explain Yes 80 % No 13%

- Reduce down time from flu like symptoms and the spread of the flu to colleagues.
- We work with at risk groups and need to take care of them as well as ourselves.
- We work with at risk groups and need to take care of them as well as ourselves.
- Personal choice.
- Visiting practices would put you at risk of getting the flu just like other staff in those clinics so we would need to be protected.
- It's so easy and if I had to go to the pharmacy and my GP I might not find the time.
- I do if a person is in an at risk group, or suffers with colds and flu - personal decision.
- To inhibit spread through workplace, home.
- Because we should practice what we preach.
- Explain - it is important for all who work in health, in clinical and non-clinical roles, to have the flu vaccine annually so we can maintain a healthy work place and also lead by example.

- Reduces staff absences and reduces chances of colleagues passing on illness to others who take it home and make family members ill.
- Yes because working with the public it can spread easier. If you have the vaccine you are less likely to have time off work also.
- Reduces possibility of loss of work hours / productivity.
- Due to seeing so many people important to me.
- Less time off work.
- Increased protection for elderly and young.
- To help build immunity.
- It reduces the amount of sick leave taken.
- For those that are susceptible to flu it is a great idea - this avoids too many sick days in the office.
- Keeps sick days to a minimum.
- Depends on the contact of staff within the community and the individual risks of the program.
- Protecting the community and self health.
- Prevent sickness.
- It is important to take precautions to prevent sickness.
- It's important for everyone to have the Flu vaccine annually.
- Those at most risk should receive the vaccine. As a fit, healthy male I believe my own immune system has the capacity to naturally combat and recover from the illness.
- Protect workers and family, especially elderly. Decreases the risk of staff going sick.
- It reduces sick leave and it reduces the spread of influenza.
- Depends on their role in the organisation.
- Can decrease illness in the workplace - productivity and sick days.
- Great for staff benefits. Also, we in this line of work come into contact with a population who are more likely to be immunosuppressed, hence very beneficial for ourselves and our patients.
- I feel it is important for staff to be offered the opportunity to have the vaccine.
- To reduce the chance of spreading the flu around the office.
- Personal choice.
- Helps prevent spread of disease, and lost time illness.
- Important to have the option.
- We are in contact with general practice.
- Decrease the spread of flu to the sick and vulnerable.
- They should be given the choice.
- To protect themselves and their family.
- The benefit of not having staff on sick leave with the flu and to help stop the spread of the scourge.
- Prevent bugs in the workplace, decrease sick leave, but

this is an individual decision.

- I feel that management should offer this annually.
- Dealing with ill patients.
- It is a decision for each individual to make.
- We quite often come into contact with clients who have compromised health, therefore we should not expose them to a condition that can be prevented.
- Won't need time off work.
- Help keep staff healthy.
- Because of the time of field we work in and within the community.
- Because we all work together in close contact.
- It should be their choice.
- Reduce absenteeism.
- Minimises the risks of acquiring the disease and cross infection. This results in less man hours lost in the workplace.
- Protect staff.
- Yes - being ill -unpleasant - time off work - creates backlog of work.
- I do think everyone in the office should be vaccinated. Less chance of sharing the flu. (I don't want to get sick)
- Reduce workplace cross infection.
- Decrease sick time burden.
- Set an example to all health workers.
- It's important to have the option of taking it.
- Reduce illness and transmission.
- Keeps the workplace safe.
- This is a safe and effective vaccine and apart from protecting myself I believe it is important to protect others around me.
- Health workers need to be protected from flu & from passing on the virus.
- Lessens staff sick leave/ maintains staff productivity.
- Awareness/education of staff.
- Reduces infection amongst co-workers.
- Although it is the individuals' choice, if all vaccinated it is less likely to be passed around the office and to our families.
- Protects other staff and patients I come in contact with.

7. What benefits would you describe were important to you by having the flu vaccine?

- Not having the flu means I could keep working when others were getting ill all around me. Also I didn't infect anyone else.
- Not really sure as I don't get the flu.
- I think having the vaccine helped me not get the common cold or the swine flu as bad as the rest of my

- family and friends who didn't have the vaccine.
- Less chance of catching flu virus.
  - I did not get sick and found it easier to do my work as I was not taking time off if I was ill.
  - Reduced risk of contracting flu this season, reducing risk of having time off work and impacting on family life.
  - Probably against flu - time off work.
  - Having it provided in the workplace made it easy to have it done.
  - Not having the flu would be the greatest benefit.
  - Not getting the flu.
  - Not passing it on to others.
  - Not having time off work.
  - Maintain health
  - Reduce risk of passing flu virus to a patient.
  - Getting sick during winter months and passing the flu onto my children.
  - Decrease risk of serious illness.
  - Maintain good health.
  - Protect myself and family.
  - Avoid getting sick, so avoid sick days off work.
  - Helps to not get the flu in '09.
  - Available through work.
  - Reducing the risk due to such a high exposure.
  - Protection for flu.
  - Less sick days.
  - It certainly helped with my immunity against H1N1. I have never been so sick for years, but feel that I would have probably been a lot worse without the Fluvax on board.
  - Did not get flu and need time off work.
  - Time off work - young family.
  - Decrease risk of flu.
  - Keeping self well - suffer with asthma.
  - Reduced risk of cold / flu.
  - Immunisation against annual influenza.
  - May assist in preventing disease.
  - Minimise risk due to pre-existing condition - asthma.
  - Reducing the spread of influenza to other members of my family.
  - In the past it benefited me as I worked with the elderly.
  - Did not want the flu.
  - I despise being sick, and I'm a sook when I'm sick.
  - Less sick leave, healthier workplace, healthier community.
  - Less likely to transmit from surgery to surgery - very important for staff that make multiple site visits in a day.
  - To avoid catching the flu.
  - No flu this year.

- No time off work
- Flu free all winter.
- Luckily, no-one in my family had the flu this season.
- Not getting the flu.
- To avoid being sick for a week or more.
- Minimise the risk of experiencing major flu symptoms.
- Minimise the chances of getting the flu.
- Free.
- Convenient - done at work.
- Close proximity to patients.
- Didn't have the flu this year.
- Having a child - didn't want to pick up anything from work.
- Decreased likelihood of flu.
- Decreased spread of flu in community / work place.
- To increase my immunity.
- Reduce the number of sick days experienced by myself.
- Reduce number of sick days
- Won't spread flu to my family.
- Did not get the flu and no time needed off work.
- Convenience, protection.
- Prevent getting serious flu.
- To protect from getting the flu.
- Because of the work I do and the people I come in contact with and peace of mind that I may be protected.
- Protect from the strains of flu that the vaccine covered.
- Peace of mind.
- My health and that of people I work with and the community I interact with.
- Some reassurance that I have done my best to avoid contracting the illness and losing time from work which would impact negatively on our outcomes.
- Avoid getting the flu.
- It's preventative.
- Protection from having flu - the 'bad' ones which are circulating.
- Overall peace of mind knowing I have that more protection against the flu.
- Prevention of spreading the flu.
- Lost time off work.
- Working within general practice and preventing the spread of the flu.
- Decrease likelihood of influenza and symptoms.
- Decreased time off work in flu contracted.
- Increase safety of immunocompromised acquaintances.
- Less likely to contract and pass to others.
- Less time off work.
- Prevent / reduce illness and transmission to high-risk contacts.

- Choice.
- I have had the true flu previously and do not wish to have it again if possible.
- No personal downtime.
- No time off work due to influenza illness.
- Decreases GP visits.
- Free.
- Easy to get at work - no need to go to GP.
- Reduces own risk therefore protecting family.
- Protecting clients.
- Protecting my family and myself from the bugs I get exposed to through work.
- Less down time from sick leave at work and home.
- Not worried about others being sick (work and community).
- Not worried about the flu for that season.

8. Did having the flu vaccine at your workplace and offered “free” influence your decision to have the vaccine?

Yes 64% No 29%

9. What suggestions do you have for helping to increase other health care workers motivation for influenza vaccination?

- Education on the benefits and whether this affects your immune system.
- Education on adverse affects if any.
- Education on the fears around the safe use of vaccines and the fears around the trust worthiness of the pharmaceutical companies.
- Let them know they are also helping to limit the spread, especially to their patients and clients, as well as their families.
- Show them stats
- Maybe if the studies on how the vaccine decreases absenteeism / hospital admissions, can be shared with the HCW then they’ll realise it really works.
- More information about vaccination and effects of disease.
- Dispel any myths about vaccinations and needles causing adverse effects.
- Needs to be offered to all staff...even those working away from main office.
- Available to staff during working hours.
- More information about the effects the actual flu can have.
- Besides making it mandatory, other tactics would include promoting the benefits to the workplace, home life, and community.
- I don’t think there is much you can do other than give it

to the people for free and let them get it done in work time.

- Definitely increased protection so give it a go. Suggest they try it to find out for themselves.
- Nothing - it's their decision.
- Maybe some local media.
- I think more public information regarding the annual mortality rate of the seasonal influenza put out in the workplace might shake some people into action. It starts people talking to colleagues and lends to more information rather than a fleeting glimpse in the local paper.
- Need to highlight the difference between flu and colds. Maybe the swine flu has highlighted this.
- Nothing else to what already being done.
- Better education of the benefits.
- Provide early in the season.
- Education.
- Keep it (free workplace program) up on an annual basis.
- The fact that they are in contact with the elderly, pregnant women, immunosuppressed persons and these people are more likely, if they are infected with the flu to suffer terribly.
- It's a personal choice - can only be offered.
- Make the vaccine available earlier in the season.
- Making it readily available for health care workers to access and to be provided at a minimal cost.
- Promote the likelihood of lessened chance of getting the flu or decreased flu symptoms if you get the vaccine.
- Ensure benefits and risks are outlined.
- Good timing.
- Continue to be free.
- Education.
- Promote benefits to staff.
- More information about flu and any possible complications that can come from having the flu.
- Statistics of staff sick leave (Australia-wide) due to flu.
- Understanding of infection control.
- Dispel myths of the flu vax - it does not cause flu.
- Addressing the myths surrounding the vaccine and side effects.
- Education / staff briefing.
- Information on benefits and dispel any myths.
- Keep promoting - easy to read and understand information on value of vaccine and how it works.
- Just to stress the importance of the flu vaccine.
- A free vaccine shouldn't be knocked back.
- Free gift - lollipop / pack of tissues.
- Hopefully HINI will have increased awareness of the need for routine flu vax.

- Make it free.
- Make it available at the workplace for convenience.
- Focus on the high-risk contacts: young children, pregnant women, people aged >65 years,
- People with immunosuppression.
- Talking about the positive experience of keeping a relatively safe working environment.
- Information & fact sheets from different sources.
- Simple statistics.
- Highlight: 'free at work' and 'privacy & confidentiality maintained'.
- Health promotion.

10. Has the Pandemic H1N1 influenza in Australia increased or decreased your motivation for seasonal influenza vaccine?

Yes 46% No 40%

- Had that one because I plan to travel overseas and don't want to get it in Malaysia.
- I will be having the vaccine each season from now on.