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**INFLUENZA VACCINATION RATES AMONG HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL
REMAIN WELL BELOW NATIONAL GOAL**

*National Foundation for Infectious Diseases Highlights Critical Need for Improved Rates;
Illustrates Best Practices*

BETHESDA, MD – February 27, 2008 – In response to recent data revealing that only 42 percent of health care personnel have received their annual influenza vaccination, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) has published two new reports: a Call to Action urging health care personnel to receive annual influenza vaccines and a Best Practices report illustrating innovative programs for increasing immunization rates.

These reports are part of a major initiative led by NFID to address the critical need to improve influenza vaccination rates among health care personnel. Despite many public health organizations' recommendations that health care personnel be vaccinated, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data reveal that more than half do not receive their annual influenza vaccination.

“Too many valuable health care personnel risk contracting influenza because they have not been vaccinated,” said William Schaffner, M.D., Vice President, NFID. “Even more troubling is the fact that these employees risk spreading the virus among the sick and often immunocompromised patients under their care. These reports, together, elevate awareness of the implications of unvaccinated health care personnel and offer health facilities innovative solutions for increasing influenza vaccination among their employees.”

Call to Action Sheds Light on Vaccination Gaps

The Call to Action, “*Influenza Immunization among Health Care Personnel*,” urges employers to dedicate adequate resources to ensure influenza immunization in the workplace. Health care personnel include all persons working in health care settings, including home health care, who have contact with patients.

Unvaccinated health facility employees can be a significant source of influenza virus transmission – among each other and to patients. Indeed, the Call to Action report cites

resources suggesting that unvaccinated health care personnel can be a key cause of influenza outbreaks in health care settings. One example is a 65-person outbreak in a long-term care facility in which only one in 10 health care personnel was vaccinated against influenza – resulting in hospitalizations and a few deaths.

Influenza can put a significant economic burden on employers and all workplace environments. Influenza outbreaks force employees to cover shifts and rearrange schedules, causing unnecessary stress. Conversely, fewer cases of influenza among staff mean fewer sick days and hospitalizations.

Four years ago, the CDC issued recommendations encouraging health care personnel vaccination; since then, however, vaccination rates have fluctuated and they remain unacceptably low. These rates have led NFID and its supporters to resume and build on previous public health efforts to increase influenza vaccination rates.

Best Practices Report: Strategies to Increase HCP Immunization Rates

The content of the report, “*Immunizing Healthcare Personnel Against Influenza: A Report on Best Practices*,” was derived from a recent roundtable meeting involving representatives from several national organizations, including the American Medical Association, CDC, and The Joint Commission, to discuss the successes and challenges of immunization practices. These same groups, among others, also support NFID in its Call to Action report.

Programs developed by Virginia Mason Medical Center, St. Jude Children’s Research Center, Kaiser Permanente of Northern California and Cleveland Clinic successfully increased influenza vaccination rates among health care personnel. While each case study reveals its successes, each also illustrates the discussions and obstacles that occurred during the process. The report also includes an extensive overview of state legislative and regulatory efforts to increase influenza immunization rates among health care personnel.

“This report outlines the complexities of implementing effective workforce immunization programs that serve to protect both health care personnel and the patients they serve,” noted Susan J. Rehm, M.D., Medical Director, NFID. “We’ve found that providers across various health care settings struggle with the same issues when it comes to immunizing staff against influenza—issues like voluntary participation, addressing concerns about safety and efficacy, convenience.”

A variety of approaches and activities outlined in these reports, include:

- Mobile vaccination cart programs
- Free vaccinations on-site
- Intensive education and awareness programs
- Use of new technologies
- Signed declination forms
- State legislation and mandate programs

Both reports are available on NFID's Web site at www.nfid.org. The Health Care Personnel Call to Action was made possible through an unrestricted educational grant to NFID from sanofi pasteur. The Best Practices report was made possible through funding support to NFID from CSL Biotherapies.

About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit, tax-exempt (501c3) organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to educating the public and healthcare professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases.

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