Overcoming Misconceptions about Vaccines

On October 28, Ohio AAP hosted this year’s Foundation Fundraiser Luncheon, *From Fear to Medical Freedom: Overcoming the Vaccine Hesitancy Movement and Medical Misinformation*. Our event included a panel of experts who spoke on the importance of vaccines and the impact that vaccination has on our communities.

### A Story of Survival and Hope

A highlight of the event was Samantha Bennett sharing her story about surviving meningitis as an infant and the impact it has had on her life today. Here is her story:

“My scars are my story, and I am proud of them. I embrace the curious stares of strangers. Most of all, I hope they stare at my art and see that I am following my dreams.” It was in a hospital room as a child where I began to create art. At ten months old, I survived bacterial meningitis. The physical impact of the disease is apparent as much of my skin is scarred; I had fingers, toes, and half of my right foot amputated. My face had to be completely reconstructed. Within 24 hours, I went from a healthy baby posing for studio photos to being in a hospital fighting for my life. The meningitis struck fast. I have spent a lifetime enduring surgeries to correct the damage that meningitis did to my body in one day. As I continued having surgeries, I also continued studying art. Although I had missing fingers, I was determined to pursue an art career by studying Fine Arts at the Columbus College of Art and Design.

Today, I am a successful working artist also known as “Painter Sam.” I proudly use my artwork as a platform to raise awareness for bacterial meningitis, and my artwork has received international media attention. My diverse collection of art includes portrait paintings, dog art, cityscapes, and other pieces that reflect my triumph over my physical challenges and tragedies. In 2011, I was awarded “Mom of the Year” for my series *Butterfly Portraits*, an art that is dedicated to families that have lost a child. I began painting the series after losing my newborn son, and it was my butterfly art that connected me to other meningitis families.

Through speaking at public events, TV appearances and media interviews, I have become a meningitis advocate. In 2015, I was the National Meningitis Association’s outstanding service honoree for my advocacy efforts to help mandate meningitis vaccine laws in Ohio. I am hopeful that one day all available meningococcal vaccines will be CDC recommended for all infants in the United States.”
Key themes from the luncheon included:

• The importance of vaccination and how we can guide our communities toward obtaining accurate medical information about vaccines. During our luncheon, we heard several stories of families that have been impacted by vaccine-preventable illnesses and the importance of vaccines in their lives, including the story above.

• The need to promote science-based, pro-vaccine information on the sites where people are obtaining false information. Controlling false information is a challenging task, but we need to continue to promote accurate information to improve our vaccination rates.

• The importance of continued COVID vaccine promotion. It is an effective vaccine, and this is evidenced by our current hospitalization rates. In the initial COVID surge, hospitalization rates were highest in the 65 and over age group. Currently, the 65 and over age range has the highest vaccination rates and the lowest hospitalization rates. The 0-4 age group currently has the highest hospitalization rates and the lowest vaccination rates. This is further proof that vaccination is effective in preventing severe disease.

• There are many misconceptions about vaccination. One common misconception is that we do not know the long-term effects of vaccination. However, with vaccination, the antigens introduced are eliminated from the body in a few days. In the history of vaccination, all adverse events that have occurred have happened within two months of vaccine administration. Rates of adverse reactions are exceptionally low and are closely tracked by the FDA. That is why we were able to approve the COVID vaccine with two to three months of data, because we know that all adverse events happen within two months of vaccine administration.

Our list of speakers included (in order, from left to right):

• Denise Warrick, MD, FAAP, Ohio AAP Board of Directors, Chair of OC4V
• Jonathan Walsh, Reporter, WEWS News 5 Cleveland
• Robert Frenck, MD, FAAP, Ohio AAP MOBI Medical Director
• Danny Hurley, Vice President, Capitol Consulting
• Shelia Hiddleson, MS, RN, Delaware County Health Commissioner
• Samantha Bennett, Meningitis Survivor
• Melissa Wervey Arnold, Ohio AAP CEO
The Highly-Effective Meningococcal Vaccine

Samantha’s story highlights the importance of the meningococcal (or meningitis) vaccine. Meningitis is inflammation of the meninges or the membrane that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. It has many causes including bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungus. The most serious forms of meningitis are caused by bacteria and the most serious is due to a bacteria called Neisseria meningitidis. About one in 10 people have this bacteria in the back of their nose and throat. It can be spread through respiratory secretions and can invade the body, causing meningococcal disease. While it isn’t very common, this disease is extremely serious and can be deadly within a matter of hours. Even with antibiotic treatment, 10-15 in 100 people with meningococcal disease will die. Up to one in five survivors will have long-term disabilities, such as loss of limbs, deafness, nervous system problems, and brain damage.

There are six serotypes of Neisseria Meningitidis, A,B,C,W,X and Y which cause most disease. There are currently two vaccines that can help prevent meningococcal disease, caused by Neisseria meningitidis bacteria: Meningococcal conjugate or MenACWY vaccines and Serogroup B meningococcal or MenB vaccines. All 11- to 12-year-olds should get a MenACWY vaccine, with a booster dose at 16 years old. Teens and young adults (16 through 23 years old) also may get a MenB vaccine. CDC also recommends meningococcal vaccination for other children and adults who are at increased risk for meningococcal disease.

Use of the vaccine has led to historic low rates of meningococcal disease. The CDC first recommended adolescents get a MenACWY vaccine in 2005. Since then, the incidence of meningococcal disease in adolescents decreased by over 90%. Continued vaccination is critical to keeping these rates down.*

Here in Ohio, the meningococcal vaccine has been required for school entry since the 2016-2017 school year. Students entering 7th grade need to have one dose of the MenACWY vaccine, in addition to the current requirement of having one dose of the Tdap vaccine. Students entering 12th grade need to have a second dose of the vaccine. This second dose must be administered on or after the 16th birthday. If the first dose of the vaccine was administered after the 16th birthday, a second dose is not required.

Save-the-Date

Ohio AAP Spring Education Meeting
Friday, April 21, 2023
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Ohio University Dublin Integrated Education Center

This year’s meeting will focus on adolescent immunizations. More details to come, including agenda and registration. Please contact Lory Sheeran Winland, MPA at lwinland@ohioaap.org for more information or visit https://ohioaap.org/springmeeting.
Measles Outbreak in Columbus

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health are investigating a measles outbreak tied to 12 schools and daycare centers in Columbus. Thirty-one of the 32 cases* are among the unvaccinated; the vaccine status for one of the cases is unclear. Thirteen children have been hospitalized. According to Columbus Public Health, 63% of the cases are among kids one to two years old and 19% are among kids three to five years old. (*as of 11/29/22)

Columbus Public Health is now asking for support from the federal government, including the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The Columbus Public Health Commissioner, Dr. Mysheika Roberts, said, “We hope to have a final answer in the next 24 hours or so, but we anticipate them coming to Columbus to help with this investigation in the near future.”

Measles is a highly contagious virus transmitted through coughing and sneezing. Ninety percent of unvaccinated individuals who are exposed to measles will become infected. According to the CDC, infected individuals can spread the virus up to four days before becoming symptomatic. It typically takes eight to 12 days after exposure for symptoms to develop, according to both local public health agencies.

The virus is commonly identified through its trademark rash, a network of flat red spots that might start at the hairline and spread downward across a person’s body. But by the time the rash occurs, a person has already been contagious for several days. Other symptoms to look out for include a high fever, cough, runny nose, and red or watery eyes.

Dr. Roberts has also said, “The most important thing you can do to protect against measles is to get vaccinated with the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, which is safe and highly effective.” Measles is one of 14 diseases the Ohio Department of Health requires immunization against for all children attending childcare, Head Start or pre-school programs. One dose of MMR vaccine is 93% effective against measles, 78% effective against mumps, and 97% effective against rubella.

Several children hospitalized in growing measles outbreak affecting 7 Ohio daycares

Columbus measles outbreak swells to 24 cases as 9 kids are hospitalized

As measles outbreak sickens dozens of children in Ohio, local health officials seek help from CDC

Central Ohio measles outbreak reaches a school
Not “Just” the Flu

The rates of influenza (flu) are increasing weekly, with current hospitalization rates higher than any flu season since 2010-2011. As of Nov. 1, there have been 730 deaths including two pediatric deaths. An annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect against flu. Vaccination helps prevent infection and can also prevent serious outcomes in people who are vaccinated but still get sick with flu. Flu vaccine prevents millions of illnesses and flu-related doctor’s visits each year. During 2019-2020 flu season, flu vaccination prevented an estimated 7.5 million influenza illnesses, 105,000 influenza-associated hospitalizations, and 6,300 influenza-associated deaths.*

Children younger than five years old—especially those younger than two—and children of any age with certain chronic health conditions, like asthma and diabetes, are at higher risk of developing potentially serious flu complications. Because these groups of children are at higher risk, it is especially important that they get a seasonal flu vaccine to help prevent flu, and to reduce their risk of being hospitalized or dying from flu if they do get sick.

While not at higher risk, healthy children five years and older can spread flu to vulnerable family members like infants younger than six months and adults who are 65 years and older, or people of any age who have certain chronic health conditions. It’s important to vaccinate everyone six months and older against flu each year to help protect those most at risk.

The CDC recommends annual flu vaccination for everyone six months and older with any licensed, age-appropriate flu vaccine. There are many vaccine options:

• Flu shots are given as an injection (with a needle) and are approved for use in people six months and older.
• Nasal spray vaccine is approved for use in non-pregnant, healthy people age two through 49 years. However, there is a precaution against the use of nasal spray flu vaccine in people with certain underlying medical conditions. Your child’s health care provider will know which vaccines are right for your child.

*Vaccine info obtained from CDC website

3 Simple Ways to Fight the Flu

1. Get vaccinated.
2. Stop the spread by practicing healthy habits and get tested if you’re sick.
3. Take antiviral medications as prescribed by your doctor.
FAQ’s About Flu for You

Is the flu really more serious than the common cold?
Yes. The flu is serious. Every year in the U.S., flu causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and tens of thousands of deaths. Even when flu illness isn’t as serious, it still means missed school, work, and fun with family and friends. Flu remains a major public health threat and poses a risk to everyone, including healthy children, teens, adults and pregnant individuals.

When is someone contagious with the flu?
An individual is contagious with the flu 24 hours before symptoms develop and until they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

What are the side effects from flu vaccination that could occur?
Common side effects from a flu shot include soreness, redness and/or swelling where the shot was given, headache, fever, nausea, muscle aches, and fatigue. These are actually signs that the vaccine is working and your body is building immunity. The flu shot, like other injections, can occasionally cause fainting.

Why do I need to get a flu shot every year?
A flu vaccine is needed every season for two reasons. First, a person’s immune protection from vaccination declines over time, so annual vaccine is needed for optimal protection. Second, because flu viruses are constantly changing, flu vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the viruses that research suggests may be most common during the upcoming flu season. For the best protection, everyone six months and older should get vaccinated annually.

What are the benefits of flu vaccination?
The flu vaccine can keep you from getting sick from the flu and can reduce the risk of flu-associated hospitalization. Flu vaccination is an important preventive tool for people with chronic health conditions. Flu vaccination has been shown in several studies to reduce severity of illness in people who get vaccinated but still get sick. Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect the people around you.

How effective is the flu vaccine?
The CDC conducts studies each year to determine how well the influenza vaccine protects against flu illness. While vaccine effectiveness can vary, a 2022 study found the flu vaccine reduces a kid’s risk of life-threatening influenza by 75%, while a 2020 study found that flu vaccine reduces flu-related hospitalization by 41% among children.

Can the flu shot give you the flu?
While a flu vaccine cannot give you flu illness, there are different side effects that may be associated with getting a flu shot or a nasal spray flu vaccine. These side effects are mild and short-lasting, especially when compared to symptoms of a bad case of flu.

When is the best time to get an annual flu shot?
The recommended timing of vaccination is similar to last season. For most people who need only one dose for the season, September and October are generally good times to get vaccinated. Vaccination in July and August is not recommended for most adults but can be considered for some groups. While ideally, it’s recommended to get vaccinated by the end of October, it’s important to know that vaccination after October can still provide protection during the peak of flu season.
TAKE THE PLEDGE!

The OC4V Pledge: I agree to advocate for vaccines by spreading accurate information about the disease burden, safety, and effectiveness of vaccinations.

WHO WE ARE:
Ohio Champions for Vaccines (OC4V) is a group of Ohioans advocating for vaccines and spreading accurate information about the disease burden, safety, and effectiveness of vaccines. All of us are fierce advocates for combatting misinformation on vaccines!

WHY WE CARE:
Ohio’s immunization rates for children and adolescents are NOT where they need to be for all our children to be protected from potentially dangerous vaccine-preventable diseases. The misinformation has scared parents, guardians, and caregivers, and it is time to set the record straight.

WHAT WE DO:
We share factual, data-driven information and stories about vaccines.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:
• Share your vaccine story
• Post on social media
• Contact legislators
• Attend in-district meetings with legislators
• Write a letter to the editor
• Provide testimony during a Senate/House hearing
• And more!

QUESTIONS?
Contact Lory Sheeran Winland, Director of Immunization Programs at lwinland@ohioaap.org
One Million Ohio Children Impacted
Ohio AAP At-A-Glance

OUR MISSION:
The Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics promotes the health, safety and well-being of children and adolescents so they may reach their full potential.

Using Education and Quality Programming to Improve Child Health Outcomes

OHIO AAP AND ITS MEMBERS...

- Provided Quality Improvement programs for 103 practices.
- Engaged 5,000 providers, public health and community professionals, educators, families and teens in programs and initiatives.
- Cultivated 141 donors to the Ohio AAP Foundation, supporting programs that provide community resources for the health and safety of Ohio's children.

I always find my dreams come true with the topics covered at Annual Meeting. I could not have expected better.”
- Ohio AAP Member

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<td>Suicide is the leading cause of death for 10-14 year-olds in Ohio and in 2021 there were 30 unintentional shootings by children in Ohio, resulting in 8 deaths.</td>
<td>Created a QI program that provided behavioral health screens to 500 adolescents and provided 200 safety lock boxes directly to families. Through the Ohio AAP Foundation, an additional 1,500 gun boxes were provided to the community.</td>
<td>Safer storage and increased barriers to access firearms for Ohio children to reduce the trend of irreversible actions.</td>
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<td>Black infants in Ohio are three times more likely to die before their first birthday.</td>
<td>Partnered with the Kiwanis Club of Columbus to develop three podcasts and directly distribute 5,000+ community education rack cards to churches, community centers and health departments.</td>
<td>Addressed racial disparities in healthcare to improve black infant mortality outcomes.</td>
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<td>Social Determinants of Health impact more than 50% of child health outcomes.</td>
<td>Implemented the Injury Prevention Plus SEEK program, which distributed materials on food insecurity, parental stress, maternal depression and other areas of need.</td>
<td>100% increased provider confidence and sustained discussions of social determinants of health.</td>
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<td>Approximately 40 kindergarten classrooms are empty each year in Ohio due to infant mortality.</td>
<td>Created the Healthy Mom Healthy Family program, which distributed 2,000 bottles of multi-vitamins to Ohio moms. Additionally, 85% of participating pediatricians are providing family planning education to parents with children under 18 months of age.</td>
<td>Addressed infant mortality by adding interconception care to pediatric visits.</td>
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<td>Immunizations rates post pandemic are declining.</td>
<td>Trained 6,197 providers, clinics and health departments on evidence-based best practices on immunizations, reminder/recall and storage and safety.</td>
<td>Addressed declining immunization rates and practice management of vaccines.</td>
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<td>Smoke exposure can lead to prematurity, the leading cause of infant mortality in Ohio.</td>
<td>Developed the Smoke Free Families program, which reports 41% reduced smoke exposure in the home and 15% complete elimination of smoke exposure.</td>
<td>Reduced exposure to second-hand smoke in children's homes across the state.</td>
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<td>Every year, enough people are injured by NOT wearing a bike helmet to fill half of Ohio Stadium.</td>
<td>Continued the Put a Lid On It! campaign through the Ohio AAP Foundation, partnering with 150 organizations to distribute 7,500 bike helmets. 82,500 helmets have been distributed over the past 12 years!</td>
<td>Prevented bicycle-related serious head injuries for Ohio children.</td>
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