

Print-Despite Scientific Evidence Some Still Question Vaccines

With the exception of clean drinking water, no other public health measure has been more successful than vaccines, yet there are still pockets of skepticism that have been responsible for recent outbreaks of illnesses in this country that were thought to be eradicated.

The first infant death from influenza was recorded last week in Florida and six children in New York City were diagnosed with measles Oct. 16 after one child brought back the illness from Israel, according to [NBC 4 New York](#).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a small but growing proportion of young children are not receiving recommended vaccinations in the U.S. For the report, the CDC analyzed local, state and national trends in vaccination coverage among children ages 19 months to 35 months using data from the 2017 National Immunization Survey.

About 70 percent of children involved in the analysis received all their vaccinations. The percentage of children under age two who have not received any vaccinations jumped to 1.9 percent and that number has increased fourfold in the past 17 years.

OSF HealthCare Advanced Practice Nurse Dana Deshon hears **daily** concerns about whether vaccines are harmful or helpful. While some medical practices dismiss parents who won't vaccinate their children, Deshon uses a different approach.

"I don't believe that is the answer because I think with the proper education and with coming alongside parents and talking with them, I have definitely had people who never wanted to immunize their child but over time, they definitely will do that," she said.

Deshon says there is a lot of misinformation about vaccines in general and many relate to the flu vaccine.

"The influenza vaccine is only for the respiratory stuff. It's going to do nothing for that vomiting and diarrhea flu that we can see. That's not influenza. Influenza is more of the respiratory thing. So I think there are misconceptions out there about what flu is and how it is transmitted."

Flu vaccines also take two weeks to have an impact but getting a shot will certainly weaken symptoms and allow a faster recovery, even if the vaccine is not exactly for the strain that is being transmitted.

Deshon believes it's time to leverage social media platforms to back up the education she's trying to do every day in her office.

"Putting forth what really evidence supports, the truth versus 'this is what Uncle Bob said so I'm not going to get those immunizations,'" she suggested.

But, there are strong pockets of resistance to any efforts at public education. For example, Arizona officials cancelled a state wide vaccine educational program in August after it received negative feedback from parents who oppose immunizing their children. Arizona created the program in response to a rising number of Arizona children skipping immunizations required by public schools.

Results of a massive 24-country survey of over 5,000 adults published in *Health Psychology* this month shows social media might also not be the best tool for reversing some anti-vaccine sentiments.

Researchers found in many cases, people sought out information that supports their underlying attitudes. Researchers conclude one-on-one dialogue between a provider and patient, that can examine what is behind their attitudes, would likely be more effective than a larger social media campaign.

However, the study also concluded there are no “magic bullets” to solving the anti-vaccine sentiment and that “trying to reduce people’s conspiracy beliefs is notoriously difficult.”