Measles and MMR Vaccine Communication During NY Outbreak: CDC Lessons Learned

Modified deck for vaccine hesitancy workgroup

April 22, 2019
Meetings we attended

- **Monday, April 8: Albany**
  - New York State Department of Health initial briefing
  - Data and Surveillance
  - Anthropology
  - Communications and media

- **Tuesday, April 9: Rockland County**
  - Refuah Health Center

- **Wednesday, April 10: Rockland County**
  - Weekly NY state measles call with affected counties
  - Rockland County Department of Health

  **Wednesday, April 10 continued**
  - Rockland County communications and media
  - Shoshana Bernstein
  - Rabbi Horowitz
  - Hillcrest Pediatrics

- **Thursday, April 11: Orange County**
  - Orange County Department of Health
  - Dr. Werzberger
  - Hudson Valley School Administrators
  - Ezra Choilim Health Center

- **Friday, April 12: Brooklyn**
  - Blima Marcus
In this community, vaccine perceptions look like this…

- Jewish-affiliated group Parents Teaching and Advocating for Children’s Health (PEACH) heavily promotes anti-vaccine materials in the Orthodox community
  - Their handbook includes sections such as “How to Prevent Your Children from Being Damaged by Vaccines” and “Halachic Points of Interest”

- Local newspaper headlines:
  - *Anti-Vaccine Myths Among Ultra-Orthodox Help Fuel Historic Measles Outbreak* (The Forward, April 9th)
  - *Health Department Issues Commissioner’s Orders to All Yeshivas in Williamsburg to Exclude Unvaccinated Students to Face Violations and Possible Closure* (The Jewish Voice, April 9th)
  - *No, Jews Aren’t Anti-Vaccination* (Jewish Week, April 10th)
  - *Anti-Vaccine Pamphlet Targeting New York Parents Cites Leading Orthodox Rabbis* (The Forward, April 10th)
  - *Lawsuit Planned to Challenge NYC’s Vaccination Order* (Yeshiva World News, April 11th)
What we have learned about health care providers and parents about vaccine attitudes and information sources
Audience profile

- Women are the sole decision-makers about kids’ health
- Arranged marriage occurs beginning at age 18; child rearing begins immediately
- Family size often up to 10-14 children
- Younger mothers more vaccine-hesitant than older mothers
- Some delay vaccines until school-age requirement
- Community values treatment but does not prioritize prevention
- Values
  - Children's marriageability
  - Kids being in school (having all the kids home all day is overwhelming)
Beliefs about measles and MMR vaccine

• About measles
  • “Like chickenpox with a runny nose”
  • Can cure eczema
  • Prevents cancer
  • Vitamins can help prevent measles

• Fears about MMR vaccine
  • Autism
  • Cerebral Palsy
  • Toxic ingredients
  • Doctors are paid by CDC
  • Live vaccines aren’t safe
  • “Children who got vaccinated aren’t as clever”
Influencers

- Other moms in their communities
  - In some cases, they were listening to friends about not vaccinating, but not to their own mothers about vaccinating
- Conference calls and call-in lines
- Local newspapers/magazines
- Healthcare professionals
- Rabbis
  - Mostly in urgent situations, but not for preventative care
- Robo-calls
Health care professional insights

- **Guiding principles and lessons learned**
  - Many kids initially got immunized, but “final holdouts” are not vaccinating
  - Discussion and education are taking longer than in the past. Physicians starting to feel burned out
    - Some practices have stopped taking unvaccinated patients
  - Health care professionals are still the most trusted source of vaccine information and advice for most parents
  - Parents may delay vaccines, especially when child is ill
  - Refuah Health Center has taken on a comprehensive approach to “attack this from all angles”
    - Empowered all staff to talk about vaccines
    - Educated staff on motivational interviewing and presumptive approach
    - Pulled providers’ vaccination rates and shared
Parent insights

- Guiding principles and lessons learned
  - Some parents in these communities might have vaccinated older children, but have decided not to vaccinate younger children
  - Many parents have vague/general worries or concerns about vaccines
  - There are some anecdotal reports of families with cases not seeking medical attention—leading health professionals to believe that this outbreak is much larger than it appears
  - Teachers may be advising girls in high schools against vaccinating
  - Some moms are delaying MMR or may get MMR, but refuse other vaccines (long-term implications involved)
Take away messages
Take Away Messages

• Parents fall along a continuum; this is usually not an “either/or” decision
• The healthcare professional is the most important source of information, but don’t ignore other social influences
• Questions and concerns do not equal lack of confidence; vaccinating is still the norm
• There is no quick fix message; one-on-one education and grassroots partnerships are the key
• Need more scientifically accurate information about vaccines
• Need data about measles complications in this outbreak
Next steps
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– Reaching out to medical, rabbinical, and camp associations

– Meeting of HCP groups in the area
  • Connecting pediatricians to print outlets to help spread credible information
  • Providing CDC resources

– Material repackaging
  • Making more of our digital resources print friendly, plain language, and culturally appropriate
  • Providing audio resources or scripts
  • Making CDC MDs available for interviews/information as requested
  • Zip drive of measles disease and vaccination resources
  • Matte articles for local newspapers/magazines
Next steps (continued)

– Supporting FQHCs and community leaders in efforts to spread accurate information

– Providing assistance (PHAs) to Rockland County

– CDC in Incident Command structure
  • Additional resources available
  • Coordinating with additional states with large Orthodox Jewish population
  • CDC call regional meeting of affected states
    – CDC to share NY city information/resources with NY state