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Senders Pediatrics Update

7/8/10

Some thoughts on the eve of Lebron James' big decision: For the past 10 years, each Friday evening as we sit around the dinner table, we have asked each family member to identify one or more things for which they are thankful that week. Sometimes, it is something insignificant like a new piece of clothing, sometimes it is something important like the health of a friend or a family member and sometimes it is just a list of free associations. Regardless, the exercise has sensitized our entire family to the importance of what is truly important. The Plain Dealer has picked up on this same idea with their concept of Thankful Thursday in which readers write in their list of things for which they are thankful. In this spirit, we offer you the following piece.

"I am thankful for all those who, in print, on the radio, TV or in passing have really understood and been able to communicate what is most important to remember in the drama that has been unfolding over the past weeks. I am thankful for those who have clarified for us Clevelanders what is special about our city and about the people who choose to call it home. I am thankful for those who have helped us reinforce for our children that the most valuable players are really those who do what's right even when it's difficult, who value giving over getting and who dedicate their lives to something bigger than themselves. That is the ultimate description of a winner and Cleveland is blessed with many such winners. Let's hope Lebron chooses to be a true winner too."

Lessons learned from the H1N1 experience: It is hard to believe that almost exactly a year ago, the country was in the throes of a summer epidemic of influenza that wreaked havoc on the health care system, changes the patterns of social interaction and closed schools and camps. But as historian David Thelen says, "The challenge of history is to recover the past and introduce it to the present. Dr. John Bartlett, Professor of Medicine at the Johns Hopkins University recently summarized the take home messages of the 2009 H1N1 experience which is helpful reading as we, your pediatricians, prepare for the next influenza season.

By way of introduction, it is important to point out that the H1N1 flu season that began in April, 2009 and peaked a second time in late summer appears to have completely wiped out the seasonal flu season that traditionally peaks in February or March. Moreover, this healthy trend that began in December, 2009, has continued for the first 6 months of 2010 with illnesses down about 15%. On the down side, there were about 12,000 deaths from H1N1 flu but this is only about a third of the number who have died of seasonal flu in the past few years (about 36,000). So here are the lessons.

1. Mortality data are deceptive - Although there were 2/3 fewer deaths, the toll on society was much greater. 90% of those who typically die of seasonal flu are over 65 years while 90% of those who died of H1N1 flu in 2009, were under 65 years. Thus the total number of man-years affected was considerably worse even though the actual number of fatalities was lower.

2. Universal vaccination appears to have been beneficial. A recent study of the impact of increasing vaccination rates was astonishing. There was an estimated reduction of 144,000 cases of influenza and a 40-70% drop in mortality, hospitalization, use of the emergency department, and physician visits. The question is whether this drop is related to exposure to H1N1 and vaccination with H1N1 vaccine or is truly related to universal vaccination. We should know the answer this coming season.
3. Healthcare workers need to be vaccinated. Only an estimated 32-54% of healthcare workers receive influenza vaccination in most years and in 2009, even fewer received protection against H1N1. The BJC Healthcare system in St. Louis made vaccination a condition for employment and increased that rate to 98.2%. As healthcare workers, we have a responsibility to insure that we protect our patients and we take that responsibility very seriously at Senders Pediatrics.
4. Traditional surveillance systems didn't work but novel ones did. Everyone thought the next pandemic was coming from Asia and it came from Mexico and everyone thought it would kill millions and it killed thousands. But the New England Journal of Medicine and Google came up with novel ways of tracking the epidemic on the Internet by tracking key words used by consumers to find out information about influenza like illnesses. Google was able to map the spread of the illness in real time and was able to predict epidemic peaks 2 weeks before the Centers for Disease Control.
5. Vaccine production needs to be vastly improved. Most of us remember with frustration how slowly we received batches of H1N1 vaccine. Currently, influenza vaccine is made in eggs and takes about 6 months to grow. Newer cell-free approaches are being tested and should dramatically increase production while reducing production time. There is even one company that believes that it will be able to change the vaccine midstream if they see that the circulating disease is not similar to the vaccine. That is truly a brave new world.
6. Standard surgical masks worked just as well as the fancy respiratory masks. That is good for all of us. Should there be a more serious form of influenza that comes our way, we have an inexpensive way of reducing spread.
7. New risks for infection have emerged. Our experience with H1N1 showed us that significant obesity (BMI over 40) and pregnancy were major risk factors for worse outcome. Both groups had mortality rates over 7X that of the general population.

One of the truly amazing things about medicine is that we are able to become smarter from studying the patterns of illness. The H1N1 epidemic of 2009 was an educational experience for us all. It was more widespread than first reported affecting up to 1/3 of all Americans by some reports. But it was also milder than anticipated. At Senders Pediatrics, we distributed almost 4000 doses of seasonal flu vaccine and almost 2000 doses of H1N1 during the 2009-10 season. Distributing 6000 flu vaccines for a practice our size was truly herculean. It required dedicated staff and motivated patients both of which we have in abundance in this practice. The good news is that H1N1 is expected to be incorporated into the 2010-11 vaccine so there will only be one vaccine in the future. This coming season, the CDC is continuing to recommend universal vaccination of everyone over age 6 months (it doesn't work in younger children). So we are already making plans to make this year's flu vaccine program even more user friendly than ever before.



If you know someone who is interested in breastfeeding let them in on this secret. At Senders Pediatrics, our breastfeeding rates are 20% higher than in the rest of Cuyahoga County. With 4 lactation consultants who see each breastfeeding newborn within 3 days of their discharge from the hospital we can boast a 93% success rate at 2 months of age. And with Dr. Ann Witt, the only local Breastfeeding Medicine doctor available, we can help women with painful nursing experiences reduce the pain, women with poor milk supply improve their supplies and women without ovaries or who are adopting children achieve their dreams of breastfeeding their children. If you know someone interested in breastfeeding or someone having difficulties breastfeeding, please send them our way. They will be glad you did.

A few exciting things going on at Senders Pediatrics:

- Follow Certified Parent Coach Amy Speidel's blog at www.parentingadvicethatworks.com
- Join Senders Pediatrics [Facebook Fan Page](#). We would love if you would "friend us" so that we have one more way of communicating with our patients. There are also some fun things about upcoming events that you won't want to miss.

As always, thank you for your continued support of our practice. We look forward to taking care of your family's needs this summer.

Sincerely,
Senders Pediatrics

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