Barriers to Influenza Vaccination: An Exploration of Reasons and Beliefs in Spanish-Speaking Hispanic Adults Who Have Not Been Vaccinated

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Background
Since February 24, 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended annual influenza vaccination for everyone over 6 months of age. Although socioeconomic factors are known to contribute to lower rates of vaccination, the disparities in vaccination rates between Hispanic and non-Hispanic individuals persist even after adjusting for health status and socioeconomic factors. During the 2012-13 influenza season, coverage for non-Hispanic whites (44.6%) was higher than coverage for non-Hispanic blacks (35.6%) and Hispanics (33.8%). The goal of this study is to better understand the cultural context regarding vaccination rates in order to identify barriers and help design interventions that will overcome these barriers.

Methods
We conducted a series of in-depth qualitative interviews among a diverse group of 13 Spanish-speaking Hispanic adults to explore potential reasons for low rates of annual influenza vaccinations. Participants were recruited during the summer of 2014 from social service agencies, businesses, and medical offices in Providence, Rhode Island. Individuals were eligible if they were age 18 years or older, had not received annual flu vaccines since 2010, and were Spanish-speaking Hispanics. Qualitative interviews were conducted using an interview guide of core questions supplemented by spontaneous follow-up questions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interview transcripts were analyzed using the immersion/crystallization method of qualitative analysis.

Results
Among the 13 individuals interviewed, the average age was 40 years old; 69% were female; 46.1% identified as Puerto Rican, 38.5% Dominican, 7.7% Colombian, and 7.7% Cuban. Reasons for Hispanics not getting the flu vaccine included, belief that the vaccine causes influenza (70%); an information gap (30%) such as not being aware of the annual vaccine or not knowing the vaccine can prevent the flu; and having felt sick after the receiving the vaccine in the past (23%).

Conclusion
Based on the findings of this study, Hispanics have a variety of reasons for not receiving flu vaccination mostly based on a lack of knowledge or misinformation regarding the influenza vaccine. In the next phase of the study we will interview Spanish-speaking Hispanics who do receive annual flu vaccines (positive deviants or successful peers). We will incorporate findings from this first phase of the project into the interview script with individuals who do receive an annual flu vaccine to explore the differences and possible strategies they used to overcome the identified barriers. Ultimately, we hope to use the responses and themes to create a more effective intervention tailored to the specific concerns and misconceptions in this community.


Barriers to Vaccines

Information
- Past experiences with flu

Knowledge

Beliefs and Opinions
- Where to receive vaccine

Access
- Cost of vaccine

Self

Family and Friends