School Nurses & Local Health Unit Collaboration: A Paradigm to Decrease Vaccine Resistance Among Parents & Caregivers

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Suffolk County Department of Health Services Immunization Action Program nurses

- Interface and partner with school nurses in the county
- SCDHS nurses answer questions
- Advise the school nurses regarding immunization policies and practices
  - Based on New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) school immunization requirements and the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations.
Background

- Studies indicate that how immunization information is presented to parents and care givers can affect a parent’s decision to vaccinate
- Vaccine hesitancy and refusal are endangering the community by leaving not just those who choose to either delay or refuse vaccines
  - also those who for medical reasons are unable to be vaccinated
Nurses are experiencing larger numbers of parents who are resistant to immunizations.

Data indicates that most parents who have reservations regarding immunizations will allow their children to be vaccinated after speaking with a health care professional who is most often a nurse.
Background

- ACIP and CDC published updated immunization schedules annually.
- Other changes occur which are implemented but do not appear in the schedules until annual updates occur.
- Often difficult for school nurses to keep current.
Background

- SCDHS collaborates with NYSDOH to provide immunization information to school nurses in the county
- Previously NYSDOH conducted annual updates for school nurses
  - Updates have been cancelled due to budget constraints
  - Not all school nurses were able to attend annual updates
Objectives

- An education program was implemented
  - To update school nurses on latest immunization practices
  - To give school nurses the tools to discuss immunizations with parents and guardians to resolve vaccine resistance
Statement of Problem

- School nurses are experiencing larger numbers of parents who are resistant to immunizations.
- While laws vary from state, all states have some form of immunization regulations which apply to school children.
  - NYS has religious and medical exemptions.
Statement of Problem

- It is becoming increasingly difficult for school nurses to convince some parents to comply with immunization regulations.
- Nurses are the most trusted professionals.
  - Nurses need to build on this trust to empower parents to make appropriate immunization choices for their children.
Activities

- Educational program was developed to
  - Update School Nurses on the most current immunization practices
  - Present a paradigm which gives nurses a tool to systematically discuss immunizations
- Implement and maintain telephone call in for school nurse questions
Educational program using CDC materials and paradigm for speaking with parents was presented at
- Suffolk County School Nurses Association meetings
- BOCES staff development meetings
- Staff development meetings at largest school districts in the county

Network with officers of Suffolk County School Nurses Association

Suffolk County School Nurses Association list serve was used to communicate with school nurses
CASE Implementation

- A paradigm has been developed which gives nurses a tool to systematically discuss immunizations.
- The CASE method enlists the use of empathy and common ground to begin conversations, progresses to the science, and then concludes with nurse’s advice to vaccinate.
- Studies consistently show that parents trust their children’s health care providers in these matters.
- Information on vaccines should be provided in a proactive rather than reactive atmosphere.
- Anticipate parents/patients concerns and answer questions before they are asked.
CASE is a four step framework for communicating immunization science. The paradigm consists of these four steps:

1. **Corroborate**: acknowledge the parent’s concerns and find some point on which to agree. This sets the tone for the discussion;
2. **About me**: describe what one has done to build a knowledge base and expertise;
3. **Science**: describe what the science says;
4. **Explain/advise**: give advice to the parent/patient based on the science.
CASE Implementation

- Paradigm was developed by Alison Singer, president of the Autism Science Foundation
- She believes that if parents could find common ground with their children’s nurses
  - The parents would be more receptive to listening to the scientific evidence refuting causal links between vaccines and autism and other purported conditions
The CDC data indicates that most parents who have reservations regarding immunizations will allow their children to be vaccinated after speaking with a health care professional.

School nurses are uniquely placed to provide the needed information to help parents make appropriate immunization choices for their children.
Studies indicate that parents fall into three groups

1.) Those that do not question vaccines
2.) Those who oppose vaccines at all costs regardless of any information provided to them by a health care provider
3.) Those who can be influenced by information provided to them by a health care provider
Outcomes

- The nurses were very enthusiastic about the CASE paradigm and incorporated CASE into their teaching about vaccines.
- In light of local outbreaks of disease the nurses hope fewer cases of vaccine preventable diseases will be introduced into the community due to a highly immunized population of children.
- Anecdotal feedback indicates that parents are opting to fully vaccinate their children following the use of CASE.
- Fewer number of children are being excluded from school due to parental compliance with immunization requirements.
Outcomes

- A future randomized controlled trial would add data to support the use of CASE
- School nurses indicated an increased knowledge of the immunization schedules following the teaching


Thank you