

Utah County Childhood Immunization Study 2005-2006, Update

In the fall of 2005, the Utah Department of Health, together with the Utah County Health Department, initiated a study of barriers to childhood immunizations in Utah County. The study was an extension of the Immunization Summit that brought together various stakeholders from throughout the state. Utah County was seen as a key beginning area for study due to its high rate of births and high proportion of children within its overall population.

Dr. Gloria Wheeler, George W. Romney Institute of Public Management at Brigham Young University, was contacted to help conduct the study. Dr. Wheeler and graduate students from her "Statistics for Managers" winter course organized the writing of a survey that would gather information on family attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and barriers to immunizations for children. Families with children from 19 to 35 months were contacted to participate in the survey. The study population was representative of the Utah County population with respect to race/ethnicity. The survey respondents were primarily female (85%). The mothers (82%) were more wealthy than the general populationⁱ, and had a higher education levelⁱ than the general population. Some preliminary results were reported in the 2006 Coverage Report. Below are additional findings.

- 12.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they received most of their vaccine knowledge from the media.
- 31.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they received most of their vaccine knowledge from family or friends.
- 85.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they expect their physician to inform them about which vaccines their child needs, and 77.2% agreed or strongly agreed that what they know about vaccines comes mostly from their health care provider.
- 37.8% agreed or strongly agreed that it is okay to request vaccines from their health care provider that they feel their child needs.
- 67.9% agreed or strongly agreed that the risk of complications from vaccines was low.
- 26.1% agreed or strongly agreed that it was okay to immunize a child when they are sick.
- 22.3% slightly agreed, agreed or strongly agreed that vaccines are dangerous because they are suspected to cause problems such as autism, learning disabilities, ADHD and asthma.
- 40.2% reported that they knew of services that provided free vaccine
- 3.2% lacked reliable transportation to their health care provider.
- 37.1% agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to know more about vaccinations.

One clear finding is that most parents and care givers report receiving vaccine information from their health care provider but are unlikely to initiate conversation to learn more about their child's specific vaccination needs. Many parents are still worried about complications following vaccination. Further education pertaining to perceived vaccine risks such as autism and under what circumstances it is appropriate to vaccinate when a child is sick also seems necessary. A follow-up study may be useful to determine if people who qualify for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program know where to go to obtain free vaccine. The challenge for any new immunization education is that a minority of parents are interested in receiving additional vaccine information.

ⁱ In comparison to the Utah County income and education data reported by the 2005 U.S. Census