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Influenza virus vaccine: a need for emphasis in high risk group?

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Introduction

Influenza occurs in outbreaks and epidemics nearly every year mainly during the winter season in temperate climates. The World Health Organization reports that influenza vaccination for older people (age ≥ 65 years) in the community may reduce hospitalisation and overall mortality during influenza seasons. Studies of immunization of health care workers against seasonal influenza have demonstrated significant reductions in all-cause patient mortality and influenza-like illnesses among residents of long term care facilities.

Objectives

To measure the compliance of the high risk group including high risk COPD patients and health care workers in a community hospital

Methodology

We use telephone survey to identify the prevalence of influenza vaccination in high risk chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients to check their compliance to vaccination in Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital. We collect vaccination data regarding health care workers in different categories in this hospital during the winter surge period.

Result

Results We recruited 147 subjects in COPD patient group of a community hospital. High risk COPD is defined as GOLD stage of grade 2 or above with >2 AED attendances or hospitalizations. Sixty-nine high risk COPD patients were called to see if they have influenza vaccination this year. 37.7% had received vaccination and 24.6% had infective exacerbations of COPD required hospitalization. 37.7% high risk COPD did not received any vaccination. The vaccination rates among healthcare workers were doctors (34.2%); nurses (17.7%); allied health workers (20.4%); others (39.4%) and overall (29.5%). Outcomes More than 90 percent of influenza-related deaths occur among people over 60 years of age and high risk COPD patients have increased morbidity from the disease. Acquisition of influenza in medical staff results in absenteeism and disruption of healthcare. Infected staff can transmit the virus to patients and other staff. Health-care workers and high risk COPD are at risk of

acquiring and transmitting influenza; hence, vaccination against influenza is recommended.