Immunization: The Big Picture

Vaccines are an important part of a comprehensive approach to the prevention of disease, but their impact sometimes goes unrecognized. Engaging your patients with some simple Did You Know questions can help get a conversation started about the role of vaccination in helping prevent disease.

- Did you know vaccines have helped to reduce or eliminate certain diseases in the US?¹

Since the advent of routine vaccination in the United States as part of a comprehensive approach to disease prevention, cases of diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis have declined by more than 92 percent, polio has been eliminated from the US, and smallpox has been eradicated worldwide.¹⁻³ While measles had been eliminated in the US as of 2000, it has been making a comeback, largely among people who are not vaccinated.⁴

Vaccines may help prevent serious diseases. These diseases can be associated with complications that can lead to hospitalization, long-term illness, and in some cases, death.⁵

- Did you know that in the US, vaccine-preventable illnesses result in billions of dollars in lost wages and productivity every year?⁶

Vaccine-preventable diseases can threaten your health and your wallet. A single vaccine-preventable illness episode can cost thousands of dollars in direct medical expenses, along with the indirect costs of missed days of work and school.⁶

- Did you know that people with whom you are in close contact might be at increased risk of complications from vaccine-preventable infections, such as infants, the elderly, and those with chronic diseases?

By getting vaccinated, you can play a part in helping to prevent serious, potentially communicable illness.⁷

Remember, while these “big picture” effects at the population level are a tremendous motivator for public health professionals, it can be challenging to make these benefits concrete for your patients. The impact of vaccinations at the population level may be hard for people outside the health professions to grasp. Highlighting the impact of vaccination through specific examples can be a compelling way to inform your patients about the benefits of vaccination to them. By focusing on the “small picture” benefits of vaccines, one person at a time, you can successfully convey the impact of vaccines to help motivate your patients. This can help you make a difference in their lives and in the overall health of the public.

References: