



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jennifer Corrigan
Phone: 732-382-8898
Cell: 732-742-7148
Email: jenn.corrigan@comcast.net

National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) Survey: Parents More Flu Aware and More Likely to Get Kids Vaccinated

- *Seasonal influenza vaccine intentions are up due to H1N1 influenza; mothers see influenza as family health threat*
- *Overall, mothers view seasonal influenza vaccine as safe and effective, yet misperceptions still cause some to avoid this immunization for their children*
- *Results suggest health care professionals need to play stronger role as vaccine advocates*

Bethesda, Maryland, October 19, 2009 – Novel H1N1 influenza has raised parents' awareness and concern about seasonal influenza, increasing the likelihood that they will get their children vaccinated compared to past years, according to a recent national survey commissioned by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID). Yet, while mothers view seasonal flu vaccine as safe and effective, significant barriers remain, causing some to leave their children unprotected.

Based on what they have seen, read and heard about novel H1N1 influenza, nearly half (48 percent) of those surveyed say they are now more concerned about seasonal influenza than in the past. More than half (53 percent) of the parents polled say they are interested in seeking seasonal influenza vaccination for their children this season, while only 35 percent say they got all or some of their children vaccinated regularly in the past years. This increase is largely because of the heightened attention around H1N1 that has increased parental awareness of how easily seasonal influenza can spread, its potential to kill, and how vulnerable children can be to the illness. About 100 children die from complications of seasonal flu and 20,000 are hospitalized in the U.S. each year.

"Unfortunately, influenza immunization has not been a health priority for American children," said Carol J. Baker, M.D. Immediate Past President, NFID; Chair, NFID's *Childhood Influenza*

Immunization Coalition; and Professor of Pediatrics, Molecular Virology and Microbiology, Baylor College of Medicine. “While influenza can be a moderate disease, it also kills healthy children and it is impossible to know which children will die.”

Influenza Viewed as Family Threat

The vast majority of mothers polled also see influenza as a threat to the entire family. Nearly all (91 percent) worry about the spread of the virus, citing “the whole family getting sick” as their chief concern, followed by their children missing school (75 percent); their children feeling uncomfortable/miserable (74 percent); and they or their spouse missing work (70 percent).

Misperception that Seasonal Influenza Vaccine is Unnecessary

Most respondents rate the seasonal influenza vaccine’s safety (70 percent) and effectiveness (57 percent) as “excellent” or “good.” Additionally, more than two thirds (67 percent) say vaccination is important to staying healthy. Despite these positive feelings about seasonal vaccination, one-third of mothers still have no intention of having their children vaccinated this year, and another 10 percent say their decision about vaccination would vary for each child. The top reason they have not vaccinated annually, respondents say, is that they think the vaccine is unnecessary, based on either of the following mistaken beliefs:

- “A healthy child doesn’t need to be vaccinated”
- “There are other ways to avoid seasonal flu that are just as effective as vaccination”

Another reason parents do not regularly have their children vaccinated for seasonal influenza is that they enjoy freedom of choice they do not have with required childhood vaccines. Slightly more than half (52 percent) say they did not have their children vaccinated for influenza annually because their pediatrician left the decision up to them.

“The survey highlights a tendency among these parents to rely on ‘magical’ or wishful thinking about seasonal influenza, rather than follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation that all children ages six months through 18 years be vaccinated.” said Dr. Baker. “While it’s encouraging that H1N1 has put seasonal influenza higher on parents’ radar, the survey reveals the need for more disease education and for health care providers to emphasize to parents that immunization is the best way to prevent flu.”

“Previous research has shown that the advice of a health care professional is an important factor in a patient’s decision to get vaccinated against influenza. Since many people will have to be vaccinated against more than one kind of virus this year, communication between patients, parents and health care professionals will be essential”, added Dr. Baker.

In an effort to encourage more discussion between pediatricians and parents about influenza immunization as a measure of preventive health, NFID is asking health care professionals to sign and display a statement showing their commitment to seasonal influenza vaccination. Called the Health Care Professionals' Influenza Vaccination Commitment, it lets patients know that their health care professional strongly recommends annual flu vaccination. It provides the official recommendations on flu vaccination from the CDC, and encourages patients to ask for vaccination. The statement is available at www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org/proxy.

About the Survey

The telephone survey of 500 mothers in the United States was conducted by Opinion Research Company August 19 – 25, 2009. The survey was sponsored by the National Foundation of Infectious Diseases (NFID) as part of its efforts to focus on pediatric influenza. To qualify, respondents had to have children six months through 18 years of age living with them in their household. The survey was designed to examine mothers’ knowledge and attitudes about seasonal influenza and vaccination. The margin of error is 4.4 percent for the entire sample.

About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit, tax-exempt (501c3) organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to educating the public and health care professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. NFID established the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* in 2007 to help increase awareness and education about pediatric influenza and benefits of immunization. *Coalition* members include more than 30 of the nation's leading public health, medical, patient and parent groups. The *Coalition* is made possible through an unrestricted educational grant to NFID from sanofi pasteur.

More information can be found at www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org and www.nfid.org.

###