

# Using the Influencer Model to Prevent Influenza at the University of Virginia Medical Center



**About the University of Virginia Medical Center:** *UVA Medical Center is ranked as the top hospital in Virginia, according to U.S. News & World Report. In addition, three of the medical center's specialties were ranked in the top 50 nationally: Cancer, Urology and Nephrology. Located in Charlottesville, Virginia, the UVA Medical Center is a 612-bed general medical and surgical facility.*

## THE CHALLENGE

*U.S. News & World Report* ranks the University of Virginia (UVA) Medical Center among the best in the nation in three adult and four pediatric specialties. The Medical Center admits nearly 30,000 patients and sees 875,000 people for outpatient visits annually. With such a high volume of patients, hospital officials realized they were missing an opportunity to vaccinate for influenza. Patients are screened when they are admitted to determine if they have received the vaccination during the flu season. In 2015, 84 percent of UVA Medical Center patients either received or were offered the flu vaccination.

The number was unacceptable according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), which requires that 95 percent of patients either get or refuse the influenza shot each year. Failure to meet the requirements means a hospital is unable to claim all reimbursements from CMS for Medicare and Medicaid patients, which would be about \$100,000 annually. Taking preventative action also costs less in the long run for the patient and the hospital.

In addition, in some cases, patients can die from influenza, so it's critical to screen for or offer the flu shot when they first come into the hospital. "It's a tragedy for anybody to die from the flu if it can be prevented with an influenza shot," said Karin League, associate chief of UVA Children's Hospital. "And it's a missed opportunity when we have a patient in our care and we don't protect him or her from the flu."

## THE SOLUTION

League approached Rose Markey, senior organizational development (OD) consultant with the medical center's human resources office, about applying the behavior change model from Influencer Training to the center's flu shot screening program. Markey is certified in Influencer Training, and the two had teamed up in the past to



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use the model to reduce unplanned extubations or premature removal of life-supporting tubes in newborn babies.

Based on experience, League and Markey knew the Six Sources of Influence™ could help solve the challenge regarding flu shot screening. First, they called together a group of positive deviants — people who had high rates of influenza vaccinations — to identify the crucial moments behind increasing staff awareness of flu shot screening. They discovered that nurses have an opportunity to screen for the flu shot 1) when patients are admitted or when they move from the intensive care unit to the floor, and, 2) when patients are transferred to another unit or are discharged.

League and Markey then determined which vital behaviors would ensure staff looked for these opportunities:

- Ask the patient: Nurses, physicians, technicians and everyone else who came in contact with the patient would be required to ask if he or she had received the flu shot since September 2015.
- Record the answer: Whoever did the screening needed to follow the prompts in the hospital's electronic medical record software to record the answer and provide the proper documentation.

Because the issue was complex, League and Markey decided to focus on the vital behaviors of the RNs who were primarily the ones screening patients

or administering the flu shot. In August, Markey set out to provide Influencer education to all inpatient nurse managers and team leads and to start conversations about ways to use the six sources to tackle the behavior change. League and Markey then implemented standards that personnel were required to follow in order to comply with the CMS regulation. They came up with interventions that hit all Six Sources of Influence:

**Personal Ability.** League rolled out required computer-based learning courses that instructed RNs on how to screen patients. She also taught each team of nurses how to use the reporting tools and answered any questions or concerns they had.

**Personal Motivation.** League regularly met with nurse managers to review the data, the challenges, and the progress their teams were making. If a team struggled, she brought in a physician for infectious disease who talked about the importance of complying from the patient's perspective.

**Social Motivation.** League and Markey recruited a group of "Flu Shot Champions" who received additional education and as a result, encouraged others to act. They shared constant feedback with the champions regarding which initiatives worked best and kept them apprised of the results so they could encourage other nurses to follow suit.

**Structural Ability.** Interventions were made to the electronic medical records to make it easier to document, find information, and see if the vaccine was readily available. Feedback from RNs and the team of champions was acted upon immediately to show leadership was serious about the importance of making immediate progress.

**Structural Motivation.** League and Markey established an incentive program, so the units with the best results received gift cards to a national retail store.

"In everything we did, we stressed the fact that our actions can prevent people from dying from the flu," Markey said. "We appealed to the nurses that they had the power to save people, and that message was pretty effective."

## THE RESULTS

UVA Medical Center made remarkable progress in a short period of time. In one year, the compliance for flu shot screening climbed 12 percent, from 84 to 96. Now, the hospital is fully compliant with CMS regulations for flu shot screening.

"Screening for flu shots was a really big project and it was hospital-wide," Markey said. "It really brought our people together and the results speak for themselves."

### RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Increased flu shot screening compliance by **12%**.
- Achieved a total of **96%** compliance for inpatient screening for the flu shot.

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This training infuses classroom time with original video clips of modern-day change agents who have solved some of the world's most complex business and societal problems. The Influencer course delivers an award-winning, proven model for changing behavior by applying six sources of influence to solve your most persistent problems.

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