



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Medicine
Community Health Sciences

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RESEARCH BEARS OUT RECOMMENDATION TO GET INOCULATED

Researchers from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy in the Faculty of Medicine have completed *The Manitoba Immunization Study*, the most comprehensive analysis of Manitoba's immunization programs ever performed. They looked at childhood and adult immunization rates in the province from April 1, 2000 to March 31, 2008, the impact of immunizations and the safety of vaccines.

Their research found that vaccination rates in the province are stable but could improve. Overall, immunization rates for two-year-old children in Manitoba were stable over the eight years studied.

Dr. Tim Hilderman is the Medical Officer of Health for the Interlake regional health authority and is one of the lead researchers on this report. He says the universal program helps protect kids from a number of diseases such as tetanus, diphtheria and measles. "Newly introduced vaccinations like chicken pox have already led to a decline in hospitalizations," says Dr. Hilderman.

Factors that appear to influence the immunization rates for children are the size of a family, family income, the age of the mother and the ability to see the same healthcare provider regularly says Dr. Alan Katz, Associate Director of Research at MCHP and another lead researcher for this report. "Regional variations also appear to influence vaccination coverage rates in children," says Dr. Katz. "We also found that generally children in northern communities are less likely to be vaccinated than those in the south of the province."

The study looked at shots for flu and pneumonia in adults with a specific focus on three groups: pregnant women and women with a newborn, people older than 64, and people with chronic illness like diabetes. Manitobans 65 and over have the highest rate of immunizations and people with chronic illness have higher immunization rates than those without illness. Flu immunization reduced hospitalization and mortality in those over 65.

The study recommended that Manitobans should get immunizations as a way of preventing disease.

Finally, the researchers noted that nothing in the report was found to link vaccinations with rare disorders like Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a concern that prevents some people from getting vaccinations.

MCHP is a research unit in the Department of Community Health Sciences in the Faculty of Medicine, at the University of Manitoba. Research scientists and their collaborators at MCHP study health services, population and public health, and the social determinants of health using data from the entire population of Manitoba. Most of the research answers questions of interest to policy makers based on a formal association with Manitoba Health and input from other government departments.



Drs. Katz and Hilderman are available for interviews by contacting the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba, at 204-789-3669.

The summary and full report will be available for download on Wednesday, April 4 from <http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html>

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