

Pharmacists on the Front Lines of Community Health: The Pneumonia Prevention Project

The Pharmacists Pneumonia Prevention Project (PPPP) is an education-based initiative being conducted by the Jefferson School of Pharmacy (JSP) that aims to address a substantial public health concern of older adults in the Philadelphia area. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that everyone over the age of 65 receive the pneumococcal vaccine, however, research shows that only 49% of this population in Philadelphia do so.^{1,2} Pneumococcal infections were responsible for nearly 50,000 deaths in the United States in 2010, with 65.9% of cases occurring in adults 65 and older.³ Faculty, staff, and students at the JSP have collaborated to create a pharmacist-based intervention in order to address the risks, benefits, myths, and misconceptions associated with pneumonia and the pneumococcal vaccine among older adults.

The program covered details on bacteria associated with pneumonia and its potential to cause other diseases. The implementation of the PPPP will hopefully lead to a greater understanding of the seriousness of community-acquired pneumonia and the importance of immunization.

The community need, coupled with pharmacist vaccination capability, presents a unique opportunity for new models of care to address public health needs related to pneumonia. Pharmacists undergo immunization and CPR training, often in addition to licensure, through their respective State Boards of Pharmacy. Though over 170,000 pharmacists are currently trained to immunize, these healthcare providers may not be utilized to their full potential.⁴ Licensed pharmacists in all areas of practice can meet the need

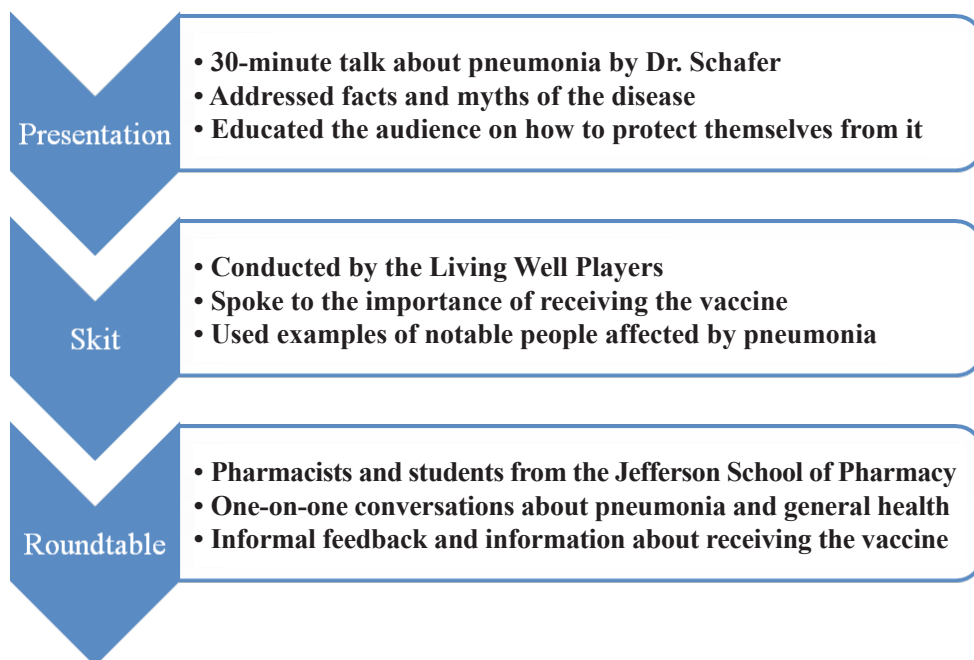
to vaccinate for various diseases including pneumonia. Currently, an estimated 77% of pharmacy practice sites allow patients to receive various immunizations with no appointment necessary. Pharmacists have played a dynamic role in increasing public access to vaccinations.⁵ Pharmacists are also trained in the prevention, management, and treatment of infectious diseases, making them a great resource to educate and counsel patients regarding pneumonia.

PPPP marks an important collaborative agreement with JSP and Center in the Park (CIP), an accredited senior center located in Germantown, PA. The project began in early 2013 and was initiated by Laura Pizzi, PharmD, MPH, Jason Schafer, PharmD, MPH, (both from JSP), and Lynn Fields-Harris, CIP Executive Director. Constituents from both sites helped to develop and organize the program to create an informative, involved,

and interactive experience. Since the conception of PPPP last May, JSP and CIP have held 4 successful events with the plan for more leading through the fall of 2014.

At each session, JSP brought faculty pharmacists and students to help facilitate the program and engage participants in discussions pertaining to the disease, their health, and to address any questions they had. The morning started with a questionnaire to assess baseline knowledge and views from the audience about pneumonia and their attitudes regarding receiving vaccinations (particularly from pharmacists). Dr. Schafer delivered a presentation, discussed the relevance of pneumonia, and explained how the audience could best protect themselves by both immunization and traditional public health techniques. They learned the importance of hand washing, avoiding close

Figure 1. Design of the PPPP Educational Program



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contact with sick individuals, and regular cleaning of surfaces in preventing the spread of disease. Following the discussion, the Living Well Players, a group of volunteer actors and CIP members involved in the program, performed a skit and song to reiterate key points and relate the seriousness of pneumonia in a manner the audience could relate to (Figure 1).

One of the most well received portions of the PPPP was the roundtable discussions that followed the skit. During these discussions, JSP pharmacists led an open dialogue in break-out groups of 5-7 participants. The small group setting enabled pharmacists to assess eligibility for the pneumococcal vaccine; Those interested and eligible to receive the vaccine were invited to obtain it immediately following the program. Vaccinations were administered free of charge by licensed pharmacists under the supervision of the team's physician partner, Joseph DeSimone, MD. In some cases, the roundtable discussions also prompted attendees to ask questions

unrelated to pneumonia. Specifically, they received counseling on various individual concerns such as side effects of specific antihypertensives, management of insulin regimens, and what to expect from a new inhaler to manage chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

The positive support for this program has generated enthusiasm among all involved. The PPPP has been an informative healthcare intervention for all who "don't want to get that bug!"

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