

**Pneumococcal (PPSV-23, Pneumovax) Vaccination for the
Uninsured and Underserved in Rochester, New York**

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Introduction

In 2019, 28.9 million individuals in the United States were uninsured, equaling a rate of 10.9% among the nonelderly population.¹ Lack of insurance can poorly impact health as the uninsured are less likely than those with insurance to receive preventative care and services for chronic diseases. Many who are uninsured will not obtain recommended treatments due to cost of care and are more likely to be hospitalized for avoidable health problems.¹

U.S. Census Bureau data in 2017 found Rochester, New York to be the third-poorest city among the 75 largest in the country.² Rochester had an overall poverty rate of 33.1%, equating to approximately 32,000 people living on about \$230 per week (as the federal poverty line in 2017 was \$12,060 for one person).² In the New York Finger Lakes Region, where Rochester is located, 8% of white non-Latino, 12% of African-American, and 23% of Latino individuals lacked insurance coverage in 2016.³

Pneumococcal vaccination coverage for individuals 19-64 years at increased risk for pneumococcal diseases was 24.5% in 2017.⁴ In those ≥ 65 years, vaccination coverage was 69%.⁴ Barriers to pneumococcal vaccination include lack of awareness of the disease or vaccine, lack of provider recommendation, competing priorities, patient refusal incomplete or inaccessible documentation of previous vaccines, healthcare system delivery challenges, and lack of ability to pay for vaccines.^{5,6}

This project aimed to decrease the cost barrier and delivery challenges of pneumococcal vaccination at a clinic housed in the city of Rochester. The clinic, St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, serves individuals who are uninsured and under-insured.⁷ St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center does not routinely stock pneumococcal vaccinations due to the cost of the vaccines. Partnership between the clinic and a local pharmacy will allow for an opportunity for uninsured patients to get vaccinated at a familiar location with no cost barrier.

Updates

This project was initially focused on increasing access to influenza vaccinations at an annual day of services event in partnership with an organization who focuses on serving the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the day of services was cancelled, and many health clinic services were limited or unavailable. Cases of influenza were lower than normal because of masking and social distancing. Because of these factors, the project gained approval to focus on increasing access to pneumococcal vaccinations in a clinic that serves individuals who are uninsured.

Partnerships

- St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center in Rochester, New York provides health services to uninsured and under-insured individuals.
- Wegmans Pharmacy is a regional pharmacy with headquarters in Rochester, New York.
- St. John Fisher College, Wegmans School of Pharmacy is a pharmacy school in Rochester, New York that focuses on service to the community along with comprehensive pharmacy education.

Objective

Utilize grant funds to increase access of pneumococcal vaccination (PPSV-23, Pneumovax) in the uninsured population of Rochester, New York.

Methods

Patient records at St. Joseph Neighborhood Center were reviewed to determine the need for pneumococcal (Pneumovax, PPSV-23) vaccination. Need was based on CDC/ACIP criteria, including age and comorbidities. Individuals who were eligible for the vaccine were contacted to discuss pneumococcal vaccination and to schedule an appointment for the patient if they were interested in receiving the vaccination.

A single day clinic was scheduled to complete the vaccinations. The clinic was held in conjunction with the Wegmans School of Pharmacy annual service day which allowed for the integration of students into the process. Vaccines were transported to the clinic from Wegmans Pharmacy for the vaccination clinic. Patients completed intake paperwork for the vaccination and had an opportunity to discuss the vaccine with pharmacists and pharmacy students prior to vaccination.

Budget

Seven Pneumovax (PPSV-23) vaccinations were purchased. The vaccinations cost \$145.99 per vaccine, for a total of \$1,021.93. Costs in excess of the \$1,000 grant were covered by the Wegmans School of Pharmacy, St. John Fisher College, Rochester, New York.

Results

As a part of the Wegmans School of Pharmacy Annual Service Day, a small vaccination clinic was hosted at St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center on April 1, 2021. Uninsured individuals eligible and interested in the Pneumovax (PPSV-23) vaccination were able to receive the vaccine at that time. Pharmacy students, pharmacists, and staff of the center were involved in the vaccine transport, administration, and recording.

On the day of the clinic, four individuals were vaccinated. St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, in partnership with Wegmans Pharmacy and Wegmans School of Pharmacy, will continue to offer the Pneumovax (PPSV-23) vaccine to those eligible and uninsured to fulfill the objective of the project.

Conclusion

Grant funds allowed for the vaccination of seven uninsured individuals who would have otherwise not been able to afford pneumococcal vaccination. Integrating pharmacy students into the project increased their knowledge and understanding of the uninsured population and the pneumococcal vaccine recommendations. The partnerships between St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, Wegmans Pharmacy, and Wegmans School of Pharmacy were successful.

Despite the success, there were limitations and learning opportunities associated with this project. At the time of the clinic, concern for COVID-19 infection possibly decreased the number of individuals that would have been interested in participating in a vaccination clinic. Additionally, at the time of the vaccination clinic, COVID-19 vaccination opportunities were high, and the guidance at that time was to not combine vaccines and ensure a waiting period of at least two weeks between vaccinations, causing some barriers to pneumococcal vaccination.

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