News

• Following nomination by The Gerontological Society of America (GSA), Stefan Gravenstein, MD, MPH, AGSF, FACP, FGSA, has been appointed to a 4-year term on the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). An active member of GSA’s National Adult Vaccination Program (NAVP) workgroup since its inception in 2012, Gravenstein is dually appointed as a professor in the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Care in the Department of Medicine in the Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University and the Department of Health Services Policy and Practice at Brown’s School of Public Health. He is an academic and clinical geriatrician who has led academic programs in geriatrics both in Virginia and Ohio. Gravenstein “has broad experience in performing clinical trials of various vaccines in the elderly in multiple settings,” wrote Myron M. Levine, MD, DTPH, of the University of Maryland, in a letter of support. “Moreover, he is also experienced in advocacy for enhanced immunization coverage of vulnerable elderly populations such as those in nursing homes and other senior living accommodations.”

• Pregnant women who received influenza vaccinations were 40% less likely to be hospitalized for laboratory-confirmed influenza, according to a large CDC-coauthored study in Clinical Infectious Diseases. Data for more than 2 million pregnant women from four countries showed that 80% of pregnancies overlapped with the influenza season and the vaccine was equally protective across comorbidities and all trimesters. Flu vaccine was equally protective for pregnant women with underlying medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes, which also increase the risk of serious medical complications including a worsening of those chronic conditions.

• Contrary to other studies showing a possible interaction between statins and influenza vaccination, an analysis of Medicare data shows that older adults receiving statins and standard- or high-dose influenza vaccines were not at “substantially” higher risk for influenza-related medical encounters (Clin Infect Dis. 2018;67:378–387). Retrospective cohort analysis of 2.8 million Medicare beneficiaries vaccinated at pharmacies in the 2010–11 through 2014–15 seasons shows that those also using statins had a statistically significant but very small increase in risk of influenza-related medical visits and hospitalizations.
When GSA hosts its Annual Scientific Meeting on November 14–18, flu season will be well underway, as will public health efforts to get people vaccinated. Consider sharing a message in your newsletter or on your organization’s social media pages about the importance of vaccination for family, health care workers, residents of long-term care, and those visiting young children and older adult family members.

The CDC offers a digital media toolkit with easy-to-use fact sheets, flyers, posters, sample newsletter blurbs, social media images and messages, and more. Also take a look at recent issues of this newsletter for details on messages such as these:

- High-dose influenza vaccine has a positive return on investment in long-term care facilities and is significantly more effective in older adults and those who have received solid organ transplants (July 2018 issue).
- Use numbers to dispel myths about influenza vaccinations (June 2018 issue).
- Ask hesitant patients about the reasons behind their concerns regarding vaccines. Address those head on by talking about the importance of getting vaccinated, the strengths of the vaccine development and production process, and the affordability and convenience of the influenza vaccine. And remind them of the growing evidence that serious, potentially fatal cardiovascular events often follow bouts of the flu (April 2018 issue).

In an article published in *Nature Microbiology*, researchers report isolation of a mini-viral RNA (mvRNA) that could explain the profound pathology produced by the *influenza H1N1 virus that caused the 1918 pandemic*. The mvRNA, produced by viral RNA polymerase during replication, binds to and activates the RNA sensor retinoic acid-inducible gene I (RIG-I). This initiates a detrimental immune cascade that leads to interferon expression and a "cytokine storm" strong enough to kill the host. The research, conducted using virus isolated from the lungs of infected ferrets, led the authors to "propose that mvRNAs act as the main agonists of RIG-I during influenza virus infection."

**Resources**

- “Standing Orders Protocols—Addressing Barriers” is the topic of a six-part, on-demand series on the IDCareLive website. Presented by Deborah Wexler, MD, L.J. Tan, PhD, and William Atkinson, MD, MPH, of the Immunization Action Coalition, the sessions cover all the details about standing orders for adult immunization, including how they work and why they are important.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

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COMMUNICATIONS (CONTINUED)

- Encourage clinicians to include vaccines in their checklists for Annual Wellness Visits for patients on Medicare (February 2018 issue).
- It’s been 100 years since the last highly virulent influenza pandemic (January 2018 issue). One of the reasons for the let-up is annual vaccinations of large numbers of people around the world.

An old marketing adage says that it takes 7 times of seeing messages before someone takes action—perhaps yours will be the one that finally convinces an older adult to get vaccinated!

A PRISM INTO PROTECTION: VACCINE INNOVATIONS AT THE FOREFRONT
AT THE GSA 2018 ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING

From bench and clinical research to vaccine advocacy and public policy, attendees of the GSA 2018 Annual Scientific Meeting in Boston will have ample opportunities to learn about the latest in vaccines and vaccinology. As you make your plans for the November 14–18 gathering, consider adding some or all of the following sessions to your meeting agenda.

SAVE THE DATE
NOV 14-18, 2018 | BOSTON
Like a fortress, vaccinology is built brick by brick, using the building blocks of science to find the best way to protect people from microbial pathogens. On Saturday afternoon of the GSA 2018 meeting, participants will learn about innovations in vaccine development and what science is teaching us in three important areas: optimal vaccine approaches across the life span, maintaining the independence of older adults, and counteracting reduced vaccine responses following onset of immunosenescence.

Leonard Friedland, MD, will chair the 3 pm session on November 17, “Understanding Immunosenescence, Life-Span Immunization, and Novel Preventive Options,” and he will present as one of three speakers from GSK Vaccines. New-generation adjuvant formulations will be the focus of Friedland’s talk, including insights and advances in understanding the mechanisms of innate and adaptive immunity and how research is building on established pharmacologic principles and drug-delivery concepts. Other speakers will cover lifelong primary prevention interventions (Eduardo de Gomensoro, MD, MBA) and progress in understanding age-related decline of the immune response to infections and vaccinations—and how basic and translational research is finding ways to counteract this problem (Robbert Van Der Most, PhD, MsC).

Moving basic science innovations into patient care has long been recognized as challenging. In a new feature of the meeting, the GSA Momentum Discussions will present information on exciting developments in gerontology and how practitioners are advancing those ideas in daily practice.

For those involved in advocating and administering vaccines, “Leveraging Improved Vaccine Technology and the Healthcare Team to Protect Older Adults” will provide just such a roadmap. Slated for 10 am on Friday, November 16, this session will feature an overview by Kevin O’Neil, MD; a review of advances in vaccine technology by Janet McElhaney, MD; information on the link between influenza and thromboembolic events by Stefan Gravenstein, MD, MPH; and how to put information into practice, by April Green, PharmD.

Other topics being presented in concurrent GSA Momentum Discussions on Friday are the following:

- Improving the Oral Health of an Aging Society
- Fireside Chat with Assistant Secretary for Aging and Administration for Community Living Administrator Lance Robertson
- Making the Most of Longer Life: Lessons from and for the Field

On Saturday morning at 10 am, GSA 2018 participants can select among these concurrent GSA Momentum Discussions:

- Inside Innovative Technologies: Outwit, Outlast, and Outlive—The Role of Artificial Intelligence and Data to Drive Innovation in Aging
- Older Adults and Cancer: Building the Research and Clinical Care Infrastructure for an Aging Population
- The Role of the Health Care Community in Solving Social Isolation
- Clinical Trials and Older Adults—Strategies to Drive Older Adult Participation
As difficult as developing and manufacturing effective vaccines are, getting the vaccines into enough people to meet public health goals has proven almost impossible. The Healthy People 2020 goals were set at attainable levels, but only the 30% target for zoster vaccine is in range as the next decade approaches.

At the GSA 2018 Annual Scientific Meeting, a half-day Pre-Conference Workshop of the Immunization Champions, Advocates, and Mentors Program (ICAMP) on the afternoon of Tuesday, November 13, will provide a host of ideas on promoting awareness of vaccines across disciplines and advocating for change in the behaviors of people when it comes to getting immunized. For example, by studying the ADKAR model (awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, reinforcement), ICAMP participants will learn how to make people the ultimate success factor in any project that involves behavioral change.

At the large Ochsner Health System in New Orleans, April Green, PharmD, and her team of vaccine advocates have made big differences in people’s lives for several years. When the Louisiana Department of Health lacked money to implement an immunization registry, Ochsner took on the challenge of developing the software as long as the state promised to implement the system. The partnership worked, and now people all over Louisiana are benefitting from it. Whatever the problem, Green has worked to find a solution.

During the GSA 2018 ICAMP session on Tuesday afternoon, Green will describe the process for education of Ochsner staff members on vaccine administration, including training on how to refer patients for vaccines that are not administered within the health system. Making referrals successful required development and maintenance of partners in community pharmacy, particularly for the Tdap and zoster vaccines, and Green will describe how to establish such connections in a busy urban environment.

The ICAMP session requires a separate registration, listed under the Pre-Conference Workshops button on the GSA 2018 site. The process is detailed on the 2018 Trainings page of the ICAMP section of the NAVP website.

Participants of the ICAMP workshop and the other listed GSA 2018 Annual Scientific Meeting sessions will depart Boston with new and innovative ideas on ways of advancing immunizations across the aging spectrum. Be a part of this success by getting the latest ideas and information on innovations at the many vaccine-related programs coming up this month!
SOURCES AND RESOURCES

- GSA 2018 Annual Scientific Meeting
- ICAMP website