ICAMP: EMPOWERING IMMUNIZATION CHAMPIONS, ADVOCATES & MENTORS

In just 2 years, GSA’s Immunization Champions, Advocates & Mentors Program (ICAMP) has enriched the professional lives of more than 200 physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other health professionals who have participated in the structured, multiday ICAMP Academy at locations across the United States. In this issue of the NAVP Immunizations Newsletter, the activities and successes of four ICAMP participants from the March 2016 ICAMP Academy are presented to illustrate the wide scope of health care settings and broad span of adult immunization services that benefit from this innovative program.

Seeking to increase adult immunizations overall and make those increases sustainable, ICAMP activities are designed to achieve these specific goals:

• Improve organizational performance on immunization quality metrics
• Increase satisfaction with the health professional–patient immunization dialogue
• Strengthen and improve participants’ knowledge of adult immunization standards
• Prepare participants for a leadership role in their organization’s immunization efforts

ICAMP goals and the activities of the individuals profiled in this issue are based on the National Vaccine Advisory Committee Standards for Adult Immunization Practice. For more information, visit www.navp.org/champions-what-works/.

HEALTH SCIENCE

Champion and mentor Tracy Bieber, RN, truly represents everything that ICAMP is intended to achieve. The Enterprise Immunization Strategy Manager for Sanford Health System in Sioux Falls, SD, Bieber has taken the National Adult Immunization Plan (NAIP) and hardwired it into the system’s strategic plan for the next 4 years.

After completing ICAMP training in late 2015, Bieber accepted an invitation to return as a mentor to others entering the program. She is also very active in the vaccine communities at the local, state, and federal levels. This year, the CDC honored her with its Childhood Immunization Champion Award for the state of South Dakota, and she was recently elected chair of the Sioux Falls Immunization Coalition.

Developed by the National Vaccine Program Office in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the NAIP seeks to increase adult vaccination rates to levels called for in the Healthy People 2020 objectives by focusing on four goals:
• Strengthening the immunization infrastructure
• Improving vaccine access
• Improving vaccine demand
• Fostering innovation in vaccines and related technologies

Bieber incorporated these goals and related objectives as a framework in developing Sanford’s plans for immunizations. Specific strategies were included in the strategic plan, which guides the health system’s activities in South Dakota and seven other states Sanford serves.

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE

Community pharmacists are one of the most accessible health professionals, and they play an important role in improving adult immunization rates. ICAMP champion Amber Brackett, PharmD, is bringing the lessons she’s learning back to her role as District Patient Care Coordinator for The Kroger Co. in the Atlanta, GA, area.

One key aspect of Kroger’s immunization operation is making sure its pharmacists are up to date on vaccine injection techniques, including whether the vaccine is delivered by subcutaneous or intramuscular injection, which site of administration should be used for specific vaccines, and which needle and syringe are recommended for specific vaccines and patient characteristics.

To accomplish this training, Kroger first ensures that all pharmacists have current cardiopulmonary resuscitation certification through the American Heart Association. In addition, every pharmacist completes the 20-hour Pharmacy-Based Immunization Delivery certificate program through the American Pharmacists Association. Kroger pharmacists also complete an immunization competency assessment periodically to ensure appropriate processes and techniques are used. Lastly, the pharmacy staff receive ongoing support, training, and updates from the District Patient Care Coordinator. Accuracy and safety are top priorities in community pharmacy; these hold true in every aspect of immunization delivery.

BEHAVIORAL/SOCIAL SCIENCE

Strongly recommending vaccines is an area of particular emphasis of ICAMP. Speaking in Atlanta, ICAMP champion, advocate, mentor, and workgroup member, Stefan Gravenstein, MD, MPH, presented both innovative strategies and specific examples to use during patient encounters.

Gravenstein, Director of the Center for Geriatrics and Palliative Care at University Hospitals Case Medical Center in Cleveland, says that he applies the “SHARE” mnemonic in recommending vaccines to his patients:

• **Share** the reasons why the vaccine is important given the patient’s HALO (health, age, lifestyle, occupation)
• **Highlight** personal experiences to show benefit of and boost confidence in vaccines
• **Address** patients’ questions and concerns
• **Remind** patients that adult vaccine-preventable diseases are present, and getting vaccinated may help protect their family
• **Explain** the costs and impact of getting sick
“Patients should come to view vaccination as a right, and if they don’t get up-to-date shots, as a missed opportunity.” Gravenstein added. “Vaccines should be a part of patient assessment in every clinical encounter. This is true regardless of whether vaccines are stocked and available for administration; health professionals (and others) can be advocates for vaccines even if they are not immunizers.”

SOCIAL RESEARCH/POLICY/PRACTICE

To paraphrase former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, vaccines don’t work in people who don’t receive them. Asked to describe the many federal and state policies that affect access to vaccines, ICAMP champion Christy Powell, RN, has some choice 1-word descriptions: “Hodgepodge. Slapdash. Capricious.”

As a doctoral student in the University of Florida’s nurse practitioner program, Powell is evaluating vaccine policies and the impact of recent public health budget cuts and subsequent outsourcing of immunization services from county health departments to federally qualified health centers. “At the heart of these policies is bottom-line funding,” Powell said. Based on her graduate work, experiences in practice at Florida Hospital in Orlando, and what she is learning through ICAMP, Powell is casting light on vaccine policies as an important step in finding ways to increase immunization rates through policy enhancements. Implementation of the Affordable Care Act has increased the complexity of an already-confusing array of public–private vaccine-funding programs, but Powell says that only by understanding the system can improvements be identified and implemented.

GSA is currently looking at ways to continue ICAMP past its initial phase, which has been supported through a grant from Pfizer. The final ICAMP Academy of the year is being held in Phoenix this month; watch your GSA communications or send a message to navp@geron.org for information on continuation of ICAMP as plans are made for 2017.

SOURCES AND RESOURCES