

BYU student project teaches how to face the fear of flu shots

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(Medical Xpress) -- Flu season is upon us, which means one thing – flu shots. And if your fear of needles is keeping you away from immunizations, a BYU study may ease your pain.

Parents and nurses try anything from singing and reading aloud to playing with a GameBoy to distract a child from the stress of getting a shot. It may seem like a simple thing, but a BYU student's research project finds that any distraction method can effectively reduce anxiety and [pain](#). The key is that parents get to choose which method their child receives.

Amy Pulsipher, an undergraduate in the college of nursing, has researched effective distraction methods for her ORCA project since

2010. As a prospective nurse, her childhood memories of [flu](#) shot season lend to her research.

“I remember when I was a kid, and my mom took me to get my shots. I ran outside and hid in the bushes until she had to come find me,” Pulsipher said. “Yes, I was totally afraid, just like every kid.”

Nursing professors Beth Luthy and Renea Beckstrand have mentored Pulsipher in her project and instilled in her a passion for research. Her ORCA project is based on Prof. Luthy’s initial study, which found that some parents don’t get their children vaccinated because of the pain and anxiety it creates.

“This idea about ‘I don’t want to bring my child into immunizations because there is a lot of pain’ pointed us to ask how we can relieve that pain and anxiety of the child,” Luthy said. “Our message is to healthcare providers and nurses, saying these are successful options you can use.”

When healthcare providers understand that distraction methods are effective, they can start to offer these interventions at their facilities. Pulsipher recommends showing DVDs before or after vaccination or using a vapocoolant, numbing spray. Parents will appreciate choosing one of the two options for their child.

Over the course of this project, Pulsipher has had the opportunity to present her study at immunization research conferences in Washington D.C. and Las Vegas. She is impressed by the passion behind research in the medical field.

“All these people are brought together who are passionate about these things. They are working together to make a difference in the world, and it makes you want to get involved in those things as well,” Pulsipher said. “I would tell everyone to do an ORCA hands down, because it makes

you look at what you do differently.”

Pulsipher is graduating this December and is off to California to take her nursing accreditation exam. Her goal is to work in an intensive care unit.

“When I’m working in the hospital, I leave happy almost every day,” Pulsipher said.

Provided by Brigham Young University

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