

Flu vaccines in schools limited by insurer reimbursement

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School-based influenza vaccine programs have the potential to reach many children at affordable costs and with parental support, but these programs are limited by low rates of reimbursement from third-party payers, according to recently published study results by researchers from the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

A school-based [flu vaccine](#) program in the Denver Public Schools was effective at reaching nearly one-third of the students, but billing and reimbursement issues posed significant problems for administrators of the program.

"The current program demonstrated that school-based third-party billing for both vaccine and implementation costs was feasible, but problems with reimbursement will need to be solved before it can be financially solvent," the authors wrote in an [article](#) published in the May-June 2014 issue of *Academic Pediatrics*.

Allison Kempe, MD, MPH, professor of pediatrics and director of the Children's Outcomes Research Program at Children's Hospital Colorado, said: "Preventing influenza in school-age children is an important deterrent to community-wide epidemics. That's why school-based influenza vaccination is an ideal testing ground for the development of collaborations within a community."

Kempe is the lead author of the article, which found high rates of payment-denial from private insurers, school restrictions on charging

fees to [parents](#), and low payments for vaccine administration from public payers like Medicaid.

In a second article, also published in *Academic Pediatrics*, Kempe and colleagues reported on a survey finding that a majority of parents supported school-located [influenza vaccination](#) programs, although parents expressed concern about not being present when the vaccine is administered.

"Our data demonstrate substantial [parental support](#) for the participation of schools in helping accomplish universal coverage among elementary children, although some will likely not participate unless they are allowed to be present for the vaccination of their child," the researchers wrote.

A third article in *Academic Pediatrics* considered parental response to immunization reminders and found that half of parents had no preference about whether the reminders came from their child's physician or from a public health department. Most parents preferred to receive reminders by mail, but a large portion found email or text messages acceptable. Alison Saville, MSPH, MSW, is the lead author of this article.

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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