

State immunization laws should eliminate non-medical exemptions, say internists

July 29 2015

Support for eliminating existing exemptions, except for medical reasons, from immunization laws was among the policy recommendations adopted last weekend at the summer meeting of the Board of Regents of the American College of Physicians (ACP).

"Allowing exemptions based on non-medical reasons poses a risk both to the unvaccinated person and to [public health](#)," said Wayne J. Riley, MD, MPH, MBA, MACP, president of ACP, "Intentionally unvaccinated individuals can pose a danger to the public, especially to individuals who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons."

The ACP Board of Regents said it supports:

1. the immunization of all children, adolescents, and adults, according to the recommendations and standards established by the U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the National Vaccine Advisory Committee (NVAC), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
2. state laws designed to promote all recommended immunizations.
3. states passing legislation to eliminate any existing exemptions, except for medical reasons, from their immunization laws.

"Physicians should help educate patients and parents about the risks of [vaccine preventable diseases](#) and the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases have been linked to communities of unvaccinated and under-vaccinated individuals," said

Dr. Riley. "Studies indicate that the easier it is to receive an exemption, the higher the rate of exemptions in a particular state. As the number of exemptions increases, the risk of vaccine-preventable disease has been found to increase. Exemptions from evidence-based immunization requirements should be limited to medical indications in order to protect the public's health."

At the June American Medical Association (AMA) meeting, ACP joined the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, and American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology in supporting a similar measure. That support contributed to adoption by the AMA House of Delegates of policy calling for "an established decision mechanism that involves qualified public health physicians to determine which vaccines will be mandatory for admission to schools and other public venues. States should only grant exemptions to these mandated vaccines for medical reasons."

Provided by American College of Physicians

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