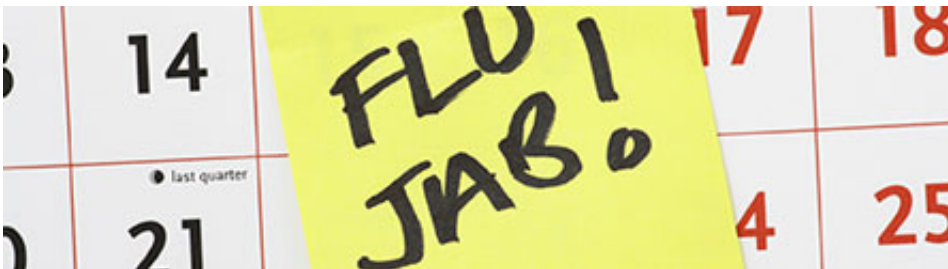


# New study reveals who uses community pharmacy for flu vaccinations

February 1 2016, by Lindsay Brooke

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The Influenza (flu) vaccination can help to prevent ill health and reduce hospital admissions with research already showing that there is a need to protect an increasing number of at risk patients. These at risk patients include those who are under 65 years of age and suffer from other long term medical conditions, are long stay home care residents or healthcare professionals. Currently, those who are at risk are eligible for a free NHS vaccination, but not everyone who is eligible gets vaccinated. During the 'flu vaccination campaign' in England only around 52 percent of at risk patients were vaccinated, against a target of 75 percent during the 2014-2015 season.

To further understand the profile of people who are accessing the [flu vaccination](#) services in community pharmacies, a new study by Boots UK and The University of Nottingham was undertaken and has revealed an interesting series of insights.

The primary aim of the study was to gain knowledge of who was utilising the flu vaccination services within a large community pharmacy chain, and whether vaccination services provided by community pharmacies are addressing the health inequalities agenda.

Pharmacists were requested to ask patients who received a flu vaccine between October 2014 and March 2015 to complete a questionnaire. A sample of data was captured electronically on vaccine delivery levels across 1,201 pharmacies. With over a quarter of million private flu vaccinations being successfully administered by community pharmacies in England and Wales, the study shows that Pharmacy flu vaccinations are highly accessed by patients from all socio demographic areas and are particularly common with carers , frontline healthcare workers and those of working age. The study also reveals that the timing of access shows that this is likely to be due to the convenience and accessibility of pharmacies.

Marc Donovan, Chief Pharmacist at Boots UK comments: "This latest research not only demonstrates that community pharmacy flu vaccination services complement those provided by GPs but also that there is a real opportunity for pharmacists to further support vaccination services, particularly in helping to protect those patients who are in at risk groups from infections. By vaccinating people in the community, reducing the incidence of flu and susceptibility to secondary bacterial chest infections, we are protecting a diminishing and valuable, antibiotic resource. We already know the local pharmacy offers the convenience and flexibility that carers, frontline healthcare workers, and those of working age require to suit their busy lifestyle and we are regularly visited by patients with long term conditions who come to us for their medicines, and so are always in a great place to remind them of the benefits of flu vaccinations."

Professor Claire Anderson, School of Pharmacy at The University of

Nottingham comments: "There is a recognised need to continue to drive uptake flu vaccinations for patients in at risk and hard to reach groups, but achieving the level required is challenging and requires innovative thinking and new approaches. Pharmacy provides an accessible and convenient place to have a flu vaccination. This latest research demonstrates a valuable role that pharmacy can play as part of an integrated healthcare system."

Rob Darracott Chief Executive at Pharmacy Voice and an Honorary Professor in the School of Pharmacy at The University of Nottingham, said: "Community pharmacy now plays a vital role in supporting the flu vaccination programme. It is fantastic to see from this paper that so many at risk people are being helped by this service, particularly helping busy healthcare professionals and carers who appear to appreciate the convenience of extended hours and no appointment necessary that pharmacies such as Boots UK offer. 2015 was the first year that a nationally commissioned service for NHS flu vaccinations ran in community pharmacy which we believe will help a greater number of people in at risk groups be protected from an illness that causes suffering and fatalities every year."

- 1,741 patients from a total of 55 pharmacies completed the survey
- NHS Flu vaccinations are currently available at a doctor's surgery and commissioned community pharmacies
- Patients are eligible for a free NHS flu vaccine if they are under the age of 65 and fall under one of the at risk categories. Of all the forms returned, 30.8% were for patients who were eligible for an NHS vaccine and of these, 25.6% paid privately (10.8% unknown, 63.6% accessed the NHS service). Data source; surveys including complete eligibility details (n=1,683)
- First commissioned nationally at community pharmacy for 2015/16 winter season

- People who are not eligible for a free NHS flu vaccination can pay privately
- In England 52% against a target of 75% were vaccinated in the winter season 2014-2015
- Complete surveys were collected from 1,741 [patients](#) from 55 pharmacies conducting private and NHS vaccinations across three localities representing 18.9% of vaccinations that were carried out within these pharmacies.

Provided by University of Nottingham

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