HSO-203: INFLUENZA VACCINATION

CHAPTER 14: HEALTH SYSTEM OPERATIONS

POLICY RATIONALE AND TEXT

Scientific data has demonstrated the safety and effectiveness of influenza vaccination in reducing the incidence of seasonal influenza, including nosocomially acquired influenza. Influenza vaccination significantly reduces lost work time, hospitalizations, and death due to the virus and the illness it causes. UT Southwestern is committed to the safety of its patients, employees, students, and community by minimizing the spread of influenza. Therefore, it is the policy at UT Southwestern that all faculty, staff, house staff, and students working or training in the University Hospitals and Clinics are required to receive an influenza vaccination or to provide written notice that they decline to be vaccinated for medical, religious, or personal reasons on or before November 15 annually, or sooner if warranted by conditions in the community. Individuals who fail to comply with this policy may be subject to disciplinary action. In keeping with UT Southwestern’s commitment to safety and reducing the incidence of seasonal influenza, faculty and staff who are not covered individuals under this policy are also encouraged, but not required, to receive an annual influenza vaccination.

Peak Flu Season
Peak flu season varies each year based upon conditions in the community. For purposes of this policy, the date peak flu season begins each year will be determined by the UT Southwestern Infection Prevention Medical Director based on data compiled by the Dallas County Department of Health & Human Services. The peak flu season will typically continue for six weeks thereafter, but may be extended beyond six weeks if warranted by local conditions. All unvaccinated covered individuals will be required to wear a protective mask while accessing direct patient care areas in accordance with this policy during the peak flu season.

Clinical Areas
Annual flu vaccinations will be required for all faculty, staff, house staff, and students who access areas where direct patient care occurs. During peak flu season, all unvaccinated covered individuals will be required to wear a protective mask any time they access a patient care area, enter a patient room, or come within six feet of a patient. Any individual displaying active symptoms of an influenza-like illness, such as fever, cough, or nasal discharge, will be asked to wear a protective mask or leave.
Visitors, Contractors, and Vendors
All visitors, contractors, and vendors will be strongly encouraged to get annual influenza vaccinations. During peak flu season, all contractors and vendors who access patient care areas, enter a patient room, or come within six feet of a patient will be required to wear a protective mask or to demonstrate proof of current vaccination. Confirmation of influenza vaccination for vendors may be performed through an outside vendor credentialing service, pursuant to University Hospital Policy 3-450: Vendor/Service Representatives. Visitors, contractors, and vendors displaying active symptoms of an influenza-like illness, such as fever, cough, or nasal discharge, will be asked to wear a protective mask or leave the patient care area.

Covered Individuals Who Decline to Receive the Vaccine for Medical, Religious, or Personal Reasons
Faculty, staff, house staff, and students who choose not to be vaccinated for medical, religious, or personal reasons must notify the Occupational Health Department in writing by November 15 of each year. Covered individuals who decline vaccination in the manner set forth in this policy will not be subject to discipline or penalty for declining to be vaccinated. Discrimination or retaliation of any kind against covered individuals who have declined to be vaccinated for medical, religious, or personal reasons is strictly prohibited. Written notice to the Occupational Health Department and mandatory use of masks for unvaccinated individuals will not be considered discriminatory or retaliatory actions. Covered individuals who do not receive the vaccine and also fail to provide the written notice described in this policy may be subject to disciplinary action. In addition, covered individuals who do not receive the vaccine and fail to comply with the requirements of this policy regarding wearing protective masks while accessing patient care areas may also be subject to disciplinary action.

SCOPE
This policy applies to all faculty, staff, house staff, and students working or training in the University Hospitals and Clinics, regardless of whether or not they routinely access patient care areas and/or have direct patient contact. Everything in this policy also applies to all non-employee physicians, mid-level providers, vendors, contractors, and as specified above, visitors to UT Southwestern clinical facilities.

PROCEDURES (INCLUDING LINKS TO RELATED DOCUMENTS)
UT Southwestern will provide the influenza vaccine free of charge to all faculty, staff, house staff, and students. Annually between October 1 and November 15 (or sooner if warranted by conditions in our community), the Occupational Health Department will provide influenza vaccinations to faculty, staff, and house staff through vaccine clinics held in a variety of locations. Faculty, staff, and house staff who choose to obtain the vaccine off campus are required to submit proof of receiving the vaccine to Occupational Health by November 15.

Annually between October 1 and November 15 (or sooner if warranted by conditions in the community), the Student Health Office will provide the influenza vaccine free of charge to all students. Students receiving the vaccine off campus are required to submit proof of vaccination to Occupational Health by November 15.

All faculty, staff, house staff, students, non-employed physicians, and mid-level providers who have received the influenza vaccine will be provided with a verification sticker to be placed on their UT Southwestern ID badge.

RESPONSIBILITIES
The Occupational Health Department is responsible for oversight of UT Southwestern’s vaccination program and for maintaining a record of each covered individual’s compliance with this policy. Occupational Health will acquire influenza
vaccine annually, promote vaccination, and provide the influenza vaccine to faculty, staff, and house staff, as well as to faculty and staff not covered under this policy who choose to be vaccinated. Occupational Health is also responsible for establishing rules for acceptable documentation of vaccination or immunity and for establishing and maintaining vaccination schedules and procedures. Occupational Health will make all such information available to the UT Southwestern community via its website. Occupational Health will also receive and track notices from faculty, staff, house staff, and students who decline to receive vaccines for medical, personal, or religious reasons, and will maintain a confidential record of vaccination status for all faculty, staff, house staff, and students. Occupational Health will also verify proof of vaccinations received off campus, as submitted by faculty, staff, house staff, and students, and provide ID badge verification stickers to those individuals.

The Student Health Office is responsible for promoting vaccination and providing the flu vaccine to students. The Student Health Office will also assist Occupational Health, as necessary, with maintaining a confidential record of vaccination status for all students and verifying proof submitted by students of vaccinations received off campus.

Department managers will assist the Occupational Health Department by ensuring that employees within their departments are aware of and in full compliance with this policy and by encouraging all employees to receive the vaccine as appropriate.

Covered individuals are responsible for complying with all procedures, requirements, and deadlines contained in this policy.

**DEFINITIONS**

Covered Individual – As used in this policy, “covered individual” means all faculty, staff, house staff, and students working or training in the University Hospitals and Clinics, regardless of whether or not they routinely access patient care areas and/or have direct patient contact, as well as all non-employee physicians, mid-level providers, vendors, contractors, and visitors to UT Southwestern clinical facilities.

**PREVIOUS HANDBOOK POLICY CHAPTER AND NUMBER**

Not applicable.

**RELATED STATUTES, OTHER POLICIES, REQUIREMENTS, OR STANDARDS**

- Texas Health & Safety Code, Chapter 224
- Texas Education Code, Section 51.933
- Texas Administrative Code, Volume 25, Sections 1.701 through 1.704
- Texas Administrative Code, Volume 25, Section 97.64
- EDU-107 Immunizations

**REVISIONS AND UPDATES**

March 10, 2016: Changed references to “clinical areas” to specify “patient care areas.”

February 19, 2016: Clarified that visitors to clinical areas during peak flu season are not required to demonstrate proof of vaccination and will only be asked to wear protective masks if they are displaying active flu-like symptoms.

January 15, 2013: Clarified definition of “peak flu season” and added provision for disciplinary action for noncompliance.

**CONTACTS/FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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