Open Letter to the American People

It's influenza (flu) season again, and the public health community continues its commitment to protecting our nation against flu. Last flu season (2009-2010) is an example of how unpredictable flu can be. A new flu virus emerged called "2009 H1N1" that caused a lot of illness and was generally more serious for younger people than seasonal flu usually is. There were four to five times more deaths among children younger than 18 years of age than in previous seasons, and rates of hospitalization among people aged 5 to 64 years were two to three times higher than in previous seasons.

Beginning this flu season, health experts recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu vaccine. The flu vaccine is safe and is the single best way to protect against the flu. Over the years, hundreds of millions of people in the United States have safely received seasonal flu vaccines. Last flu season, about 80 million people in the U.S. received the vaccine made to protect against the 2009 H1N1 virus. The vaccine's safety record was similar to that of seasonal flu vaccines. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine protects against the 2009 H1N1 flu virus and two additional flu viruses that research indicates may cause the most illness this season.

Flu vaccines are available in many communities throughout the country. Now is the time to protect yourself, your family, your friends, and others you come in contact with from this potentially serious disease. You need to get the 2010-11 seasonal flu vaccine even if you got the 2009 H1N1 or seasonal flu vaccine last season because flu viruses are always changing. Last season's vaccine may not protect against the viruses circulating this season. Annual vaccination is the only way to maintain protection each season.

Anyone can get and spread the flu, even healthy people. While flu can make anyone sick, certain people are at greater risk for serious complications from the flu, including:

- older people;
- young children;
- people with chronic lung disease (such as asthma and COPD), diabetes (type 1 and 2), heart disease, neurologic conditions and certain other long-term medical conditions; and
- pregnant and postpartum women.

We remain committed to the fight against flu, but we need your help to win this battle. When you get vaccinated, you help yourself and your community by preventing the spread of flu. We ask you to join us in this fight by getting vaccinated. Remember, the flu ends with U

Sincerely



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of Colleges of Nursing

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Roland Goertz, MD, MBA American Academy of Family Physicians



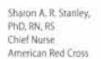


of Pediatrics Keith L. Krinn R.S., MA, DAAS, CPHA National Environmental

Health Association

Kathleen Potempa. PhD. RN CEO & Executive Director American Association of Colleges of Nursing





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Kathleen D. Jaeger Executive Vice President and CEO National Community Pharmacists Association

President and CEO Federation of American Hospitals

Robert C. Griggs, MD, FAAN President American Academy of Neurology

Reginald Ware BlackDoctor.org

Sandra Domeracki. RN, FNP, COHN-S Executive President Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare

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Andy Carter, President and CEO Visiting Nurse Associations

Richard Kanowitz President Families Fighting Flu

Karyne Jones President & CEO National Caucus for the Black Aged

Leonard Weather, MD President National Medical Association



Sandra Schneider, MD, FACEP President American College of





























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Cathryn L. Murphy, RN, PhD, CIC Association for Professionals in Infection Control

& Epidemiology Jean Martin. PhD, RN, CPNP President, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners.

J. Fred Raiston, Jr. MD: FACP

American College of Physicians Sandi Delack, RN,

President National Association of School Nurses

Lawrence A. McAndrews. FACHE President & CEO National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions

Rich Umbdenstock President and CEO American Hospital Association

Robert M. Pestronk Executive Director National Association of County and City Health Officials

Paul E. Jarris, MD, MBA Executive Director Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Michele Lew President & CEO Asian Americans for Community Involvement

Elena M. Alvarado

Executive Director National Latina Health Network Susan D. DeVore

President & CEO Premiere Healthcare Alliance

Mary Kay Henry Service Employees International Union



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