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MNA position statement on mandatory influenza immunization

Developed and revised by the MNA Division of Health & Safety (2014-2015)

The Massachusetts Nurses Association strongly opposes mandating the Influenza vaccine. First and foremost is the nurses right to choose. We have the right to decide what goes into our bodies and no nurse should lose her job for deciding what is best for her personal health. *Personal rights* are the *rights* that every person has over their own body. Among personal rights are associated rights to protect and safeguard the body.

The Patient's Bill of Rights reads: "Hospitals must ensure a health care ethic that respects the role of patients in decision making about treatment choices and other aspects of their care. Hospitals must be sensitive to cultural, racial, linguistic, religious, age, gender, and other difference." When a nurse is mandated to take a vaccine it is a clear violation of his/her Bill of Rights and her right to make treatment choices. Preventative immunization is part of a much larger process designed to keep everyone safe which includes engineering controls, education, good work practices such as hand washing, personal protective equipment and monitoring while continuously evaluating and improving the process.

Beginning in February 2015, the Center for Medicare Services reimbursement will pay 99% of what they otherwise would be paid if a hospital is ranked in the lowest quartile for hospital acquired conditions. This is an infection prevention standard and includes all nosocomial infections not just the Flu. There exists many more infections that do not have vaccine available to prevent; it makes the process of isolation and hand washing previously referred to as so much more important in infection prevention.

This vaccine is 50-70% effective and the availability has been challenging. As long as we continue to approve of, and spend money producing this ineffective vaccine there is no motivation by manufacturers to improve the product.

Hospitals have many visitors, patients, physician's vendors, consultant, administrators and volunteers roaming the halls, many of which can bring in infections. Why single out nurses? Nurses are deserving of the right to choose what goes into their bodies, as are all of our patients. Choosing a job over illness, injury or even death is not a freedom of choice.

Components of the Influenza vaccine have produced allergic reactions from the egg base or the Thimerosal preservative and those nurses are at increased risk of a range of reactions from mild to anaphylaxis or death. There is no legal recourse for a vaccine recipient to sue a manufacturer or distributor and must take a very small amount of money from a pool created by the vaccine manufacturers.

Mandating a nurse to take the Influenza vaccine is a bullying control tactic that demonstrates a total disregard and disrespect for basic human rights and as a patient, receiving the vaccine from a provider, it is a violation of every nurses "Bill of Rights."

Bibliography

www.hopkinsmedicine.org

www.cms.hhs.gov

Massachusetts Department of Public Health 105 CMR 130.325

Have a question regarding influenza?



Call the MNA Division of Health & Safety at 781-830-5776 or 781-830-5754.