

## **INCREASING DOCUMENTATION OF VACCINATIONS IN IMMUNOSUPPRESSED PATIENTS IN RHEUMATOLOGY**

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**Category:** Patient Safety

### **Background**

Rheumatology patients are immunosuppressed due to a combination of disease process and medications, putting them at increased risk for infections. Routine vaccination can help significantly reduce this risk. However, prior studies demonstrate that the rate of vaccination in these patients is low.

### **Objectives**

Increase the percentage of patients on DMARDs and/or immunosuppressants that are screened for influenza, pneumococcal, and zoster vaccinations to 80% for all 3 vaccinations by March 2018.

### **Methods**

The rheumatology fellows and physicians at the Lyndon B. Johnson rheumatology clinics were selected to participate. Records of established patients on immunosuppression were identified. Clinic notes were reviewed for documentation of vaccination status (influenza, pneumococcal and zoster). Baseline data was collected from October 25th to November 3rd 2016. Challenges were identified regarding lack of education, reminders, and staff support. As part of the intervention, current guidelines regarding vaccinations in immunosuppressed patients from the American College of Rheumatology and European League Against Rheumatism were presented to the physicians and fellows. Fellows were asked to screen all of their patients for influenza, pneumococcal and zoster vaccination. Concurrent with education as above, a template was provided to use in their documentation with the ACR and EULAR guidelines included. Physicians were asked to serve as reminders and nursing staff was asked to screen during triage. Initial pilot data was collected from October 24th to November 2nd 2017, and ongoing intervention data collected through December 28th 2017.

### **Results**

Baseline data collection identified 66 patients on immunosuppression, of which 23 had documentation of influenza vaccine status, but none had documentation for the pneumococcal nor zoster vaccine.

In the initial pilot period, 73 patients were identified on immunosuppression. Of these, 42 had documentation of influenza vaccine status (57.5%), 42 had documented pneumococcal vaccine status (57.5%), and 18 had documented zoster vaccine status (24.6%).

In the full post-intervention period, 308 patients were found to be on immunosuppression. 184 (59.7%) had influenza vaccine status documented; 160 (51.9%) had pneumococcal vaccine status documented; and 82 (26.6%) had zoster vaccine status documented.

### **Discussion**

Educating physicians regarding appropriate immunizations in patients on immunosuppressive medications and using a template for vaccines in patient clinic notes proved to be an effective strategy to improve screening for influenza, pneumococcal and zoster vaccines, although we have not yet reached the goal of 80% for each.

Future steps involve re-educating and adjusting the template with the next influenza season.