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Dear provider of pharmaceutical services,

As you may know, the hypothesized link between the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism continues to cause concerns and challenges the vaccine uptake. During the past years measles outbreaks have been reported in the United States (US) in travelers who return from parts in the world where measles still a common disease, among unvaccinated people, and/or among communities with poor vaccination coverage.^{1,2}

Public health officials had express that some of the measles outbreaks reported in the US over the years are related to vaccine skepticism and misinformation circulating on the Internet.^{3,4} Although misinformation has fueled the anti-vaccination movement, health care providers who disseminate credible information can help reverse declines in immunization rates.⁴

As we understand that providers of pharmaceutical services play an important role in health promotion and disease prevention, this communication intends to encourage you and your team to play an active role in this public health issue. According to the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), pharmacists, as the most accessible healthcare providers, should embrace their roles as trained immunizers and exercise it beyond vaccine administration, to educate.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW?

Fear of vaccines has its roots on a false report that claimed vaccines are a cause of autism. Despite being retracted by the journal and proved to be false by subsequent studies, the report is often cited by parents who choose not to vaccinate their children.

Several studies have been conducted to evaluate whether the MMR vaccine increases the risk for autism in children, sub-groups of children, or time periods after vaccination. No link has been found between autism and measles vaccine. A recent study looked at more than 657,000 children born between 1999 and 2010, with follow up once a year from 1999 through August 2013 and the investigators determined that the MMR vaccine did not increase the risk for autism or trigger autism in susceptible children.⁵

Some critical factors that influence a decision to vaccinate or not include:⁴

- Trusting the health care provider.
- Feeling satisfied by the discussion.
- Understanding that vaccination is part of the cultural norm.
- Believing in the social contract of herd immunity.
- Having positive past experiences with vaccinations and wanting to prevent disease.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Circulate information from trustworthy sources and educate your community regarding the proven benefits of MMR vaccine and the fact that studies have shown that there is no link between autism and the MMR vaccine.

Important information to share with your patients
Measles is a life-threatening infection caused by a virus that can now almost always be prevented with vaccination.
Vaccination of immunocompetent people is of great importance not only for individual protection, but for the protection of immunocompromised people who cannot be vaccinated. Of note, 90% of the community needs to be immunized in order to protect those who cannot be vaccinated, for reasons that could be medical-related. ⁴
Where to find trustworthy information? Refer to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, medical journals, the World Health Organization website, and other credible sources. Social media is not a trustworthy source! Misinformation is easily spread through social media, and misinformation is dangerous.

- Establish a good relationship with your patients, improve communication and promote the seeking of counsel from health care professionals.

For more information on this topic, please refer to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, medical journals, the World Health Organization website, and other credible sources.

On PharmPix we are compromised with the health and wellness of our insured. It is our priority to offer high quality services and to promote practices for health promotion and diseases prevention. If you have any doubt or wish to have more information regarding this document, you can call us to 787-522-5252, extension 137.

Regards,

Pharmacy Department

References:

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5. Hviid, A., Hansen, J., Frisch, M., & Melbye, M. (2019). Measles, Mumps, Rubella Vaccination and Autism. *Annals Of Internal Medicine*. doi: 10.7326/m18-2101