

INFLUENZA RISK

October 9, 2014



BROADCAST

Influenza, also known as “the flu”, is a respiratory infection caused by different forms of influenza viruses. American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) are at higher risk of complications from the flu.¹

To better understand death rates from the flu in urban AI/ANs, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) reviewed vital statistics data from the National Vital Statistics System at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics.

Consistent with the published literature,² we observed an increased risk of death from the flu in AI/ANs compared to the total population. Between 2001 and 2010 the age-adjusted mortality rate from the flu in Urban Indian Health Organization service areas was 2.5 deaths per 1,000,000 in the total population and 3.2 deaths per 1,000,000 among AI/ANs (Figure 1).³

AI/ANs may be at increased risk of complications from the

flu because of issues related to lower socioeconomic status, such as crowded living conditions and decreased access to health services.¹ Both the risk of contracting the flu and the severity of illness can be drastically reduced by receiving the annual flu vaccination.

According to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, annual flu-associated deaths ranged between 3,000 to 49,000 during the 30 flu seasons between 1976 and 2006; many of these deaths could have been averted by flu vaccination.⁴ Typically, the majority of the US population is not vaccinated. For example, only 45% of the total population and 43% of the AI/AN population six months or older were vaccinated in 2012-13.⁵

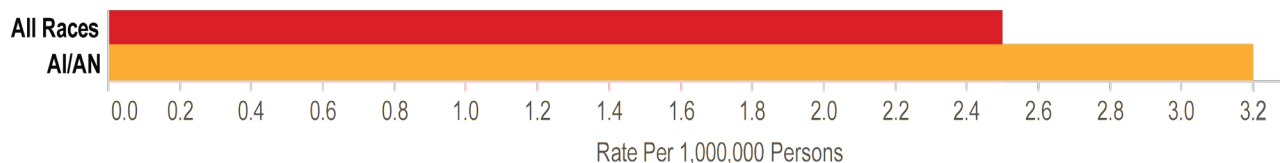
When a limited supply is available, vaccination should be prioritized for populations at increased risk of medical complications from severe flu, some of these include AI/ANs, pregnant women, those 50 years and older and asthmatics.⁴



References

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Figure 1: Influenza Mortality Rates in Urban Indian Health Organization Services Areas, 2001-2010



Source: Vital Statistics System, CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics