



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Pediatric leadership vital during H1N1 influenza pandemic



Dr. Taylor

(swine flu).

The concern of our federal leadership was palpable — they very much need the Academy's support as they develop strategies to meet the challenges of the H1N1 pandemic. This is an opportunity for the pediatric community not only to have a positive impact on a major public health threat but also to demonstrate to the general public the value of pediatricians in society.

From the beginning of the H1N1 outbreak to its current pandemic state, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has involved the Academy in developing the right messages for our members, other health care professionals and the general public (www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu). In the coming weeks, AAP leaders will attend meetings of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and the National Vaccine Advisory Committee. We will be players on the team that will craft a system of care that will assure optimal outcomes for our citizens. This "national blueprint," however, will be of no consequence without the state and local support necessary to implement recommended action steps.

At this time, it appears the federal government will be making a significant amount of "seasonal" flu vaccine available to the states by early September and will ask the states to implement school-based campaigns to assure optimal immunization of children (www.cdc.gov/flu).

In my community, we already have met with local health department and school officials to assure continuity of the influenza immunization efforts this fall. Our plan involves health department nurses administering vaccines to children in middle and high schools, along with a concerted effort to educate parents of elementary and preschool children to ensure that younger children receive vaccine in primary care medical settings.

Sometime in October, the novel influenza A (H1N1) vaccine should be available for distribution to the states. All of this vaccine will be distributed in the public sector, and state health directors will determine how to use each state's limited supply of the new vaccine. I suspect state health directors will use the same school-based system to administer

the H1N1 vaccine that they utilize for the seasonal flu vaccine campaign. We will need more community providers of vaccine to accomplish the goals of this emergency immunization effort.

Strategies to address this public health crisis will focus on efficient immunization and access to effective health care for the population. There will not be enough vaccine, medication, outpatient health services or hospital beds if our worst fears materialize.

At the state level, chapters must assure that meetings are convened that include the state health director, key members of the governor's staff, representatives of the public education system, infectious disease specialists, disaster preparedness personnel, hospital administrators, community physicians and key media representatives. National protocols must be implemented at the state level so that optimal immunization occurs and effective treatment becomes available to all at-risk citizens. A massive public education effort is needed to prevent chaos and unnecessary morbidity and mortality during the crisis.

At the local level, pediatricians must become leaders in the effort to convene task forces to evaluate and augment community resources for immunizing target groups, to provide access to treatment for sick people in the ambulatory setting, to develop strategies for hospitalizing seriously ill patients and to plan intensive education initiatives for the general public.

The Academy will provide weekly information for members on all the issues related to the H1N1 pandemic. The AAP Member Center (www.aap.org/moc) will have links to the CDC (www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/statelocal/planning.htm), World Health Organization and other public health authorities on H1N1. *AAP News* also will provide continuing coverage in print and online, www.aapnews.org. Members should sign up for *AAP News* Latest News e-mail updates at www.aapnews.aappublications.org/cgi/alerts. In addition, members can sign up for the free AAP SmartBrief (www.smartbrief.com/aap/index.jsp) to receive online up-to-date notices about the H1N1 situation.

This is a major opportunity for AAP chapters and members to provide visionary leadership at the state and community levels so that children and families receive the support they need in the coming months. By assuming leadership roles during the H1N1 crisis, pediatricians also will be promoting the value of our profession to children, families, government leaders and the general public.

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