

Community pharmacies providing influenza vaccines in Ontario: A descriptive analysis using administrative data

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OBJECTIVES: To describe Ontarians who received influenza vaccine from community pharmacies since the program launch in 2012, and compare them to those who received influenza vaccines through physician offices.

METHODS: We conducted a descriptive analysis of physician and pharmacy billing claims for influenza vaccination during the 2012-13 and 2013-14 influenza seasons, using the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) database for physician billing claims and the Ontario Drug Benefits (ODB) database for pharmacy billing claims. We compared individuals vaccinated in physician offices with those vaccinated in community pharmacies based on age, sex, rural residence, socio-economic status, and the presence of selected chronic conditions.

RESULTS: The number of individuals vaccinated in community pharmacies increased from 246,794 in 2012-13 to 764,922 in 2013-14 (net increase: 518,128). The number of individuals vaccinated in physician offices declined slightly from 2,006,803 to 1,940,550 (net decrease: 66,253). In 2012-13, 49,926 individuals vaccinated in community pharmacies had not received an influenza vaccine from a physician office since at least 1999. This increased to 135,112 individuals in 2013-14. Compared to individuals vaccinated in physician offices, those vaccinated in community pharmacies were younger, more likely to live in rural areas, more likely to live in areas with higher neighbourhood incomes, and less likely to have many (but not all) of the selected chronic conditions.

CONCLUSIONS: The policy allowing pharmacists to administer influenza vaccines in community pharmacies seems to have increased vaccine accessibility, but the profile of individuals who receive influenza vaccination through community pharmacies differs from those who receive influenza vaccines through physician offices.