INTRODUCTION

Pregnant women are considered an at-risk population for developing severe complications of influenza (seasonal flu), especially those who are not vaccinated. Physiological changes in the body during pregnancy influence the immune system and make pregnant women more susceptible to the flu. A pregnant woman with flu has a greater chance for developing a more severe stage of the disease with possible hospitalization, birth defects, and premature labor and delivery.

A local health care provider plays an important role in pregnant women’s health and can help influence their decision to get vaccinated by explaining its benefits.

AIMS

1. Identify concerns/barriers to vaccinations against flu viruses among pregnant women in Russia and the U.S.
2. Compare official recommendations regarding type and vaccine usage, its benefits, and possible adverse effects.
3. Compare public health communication approaches in both countries.

VACCINE SAFETY

SIMILARITIES

- Russia and the U.S. consider flu vaccines safe and do not cause miscarriage.
- Both countries agree that only vaccines containing inactivated flu viruses injected intramuscular are safe for pregnant women.
- Concerns regarding the presence of the mercury-based preservative thimerosol found in the multi-dose influenza vaccine appear to be unconfirmed in both countries.

DIFFERENCES

- The CDC approved flu vaccines during any trimester. However, Russian Rospotrbnadzor recommends the second and third trimester.
- Concerns regarding the presence of the mercury-based preservative thimerosol found in the multi-dose influenza vaccine appear to be unconfirmed in both countries.

VACCINE BENEFITS

Both countries emphasize the health benefits of vaccines.

- Vaccines reduce the chance of contracting influenza, thus also avoiding complications such as premature delivery and birth defects.
- Antibodies from vaccines are passed to a newborn through breastfeeding, protecting the infant against seasonal flu.

DIFFERENCES IN FLU PROPHYLACTICS

- Both countries agree that only vaccines containing inactivated flu viruses injected intramuscular are safe for pregnant women.
- Concerns regarding the presence of the mercury-based preservative thimerosol found in the multi-dose influenza vaccine appear to be unconfirmed in both countries.
- Russia and the U.S. consider flu vaccines safe and do not cause miscarriage.
- Both countries emphasize the health benefits of vaccines.

COMMUNICATING WITH RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS

In order to culturally tailor health communications to Russian immigrants in Alaska, recommendations should be translated into Russian since many immigrants do not have sufficient English language skills. Communication should be direct and clear, and immigrants should be reminded to make an appointment with a health care provider.

HEALTH COMMUNICATION APPROACH

SIMILARITIES

- Information is transmitted through Questions and Answers, interviewing public health officials, and through pamphlets and flyers.
- Medical terminology is explained and language is adjusted to the knowledge level of the general public.
- Suggestions for sources of additional information are usually mentioned.

DIFFERENCES

- The Russian approach is more authoritative, and more often focuses on Questions and Answers from public health officials or official health bulletins.
- Russian forms of delivery contain more medical terminology compared to American communications, and contain less graphics and images.
- Americans are reminded to ask one’s doctor to talk about a particular issue, while Russian communications state the medical advice directly.
- Russian recommendations regarding flu prevention often include holistic types of advice.

CITATIONS

http://50.rospotrebnadzor.ru/epidemiologic_situation/asset_publisher/Xd6d/content
http://www.who.int/vaccine_safety/topics/influenza/19k
http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Concerns/pregnancy_influenza.html
http://www.flu.gov/symptoms