



A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, and the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit

## Is the Vaccine Worse than the Disease?

### Parent Concerns Hinder National H1N1 Immunization Efforts

The response to the global outbreak of H1N1 flu in 2009-2010 included an ambitious national vaccination campaign in the United States. The federal government purchased hundreds of millions of doses and encouraged priority vaccination of all children aged 6 months and older, as well as millions of adults judged to be at high risk for medical complications of flu.

According to estimates from different research groups, by January 2010 about 30% of children nationwide had been vaccinated against H1N1. This proportion was lower than pre-campaign estimates of public demand ([NPCH Vol 8 No 1](#)), and also lower than the number of available doses. To study potential reasons for acceptance or reluctance regarding H1N1 vaccination for children, the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health conducted a national survey in January 2010.

#### Parents' Worries: H1N1 Illness & H1N1 Vaccine

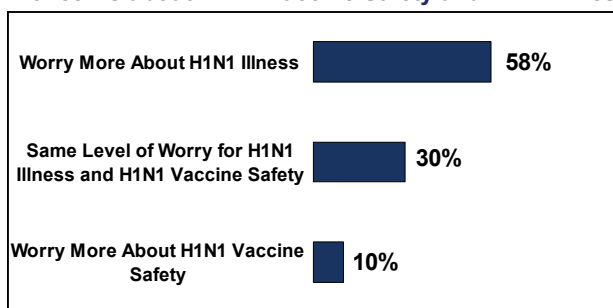
This poll found that about one-half (55%) of parents are concerned that their children will get the H1N1 illness, while two-thirds (66%) of parents are worried about safety of the H1N1 vaccine.

Looking at these concerns side by side, 16% of parents worry more about H1N1 illness, whereas 28% of parents worry more about safety of the H1N1 vaccine. The rest (56%) have the same level of concern for their children about H1N1 illness and the vaccine.

#### Children's H1N1 Vaccination & Parents' Concerns

Children's vaccination against H1N1 was very strongly linked to parents' concerns about H1N1 illness versus the safety of the H1N1 vaccine. The more worried that parents were about H1N1 vaccine in comparison to their concerns about H1N1 illness, the less likely they were to have their children vaccinated (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. H1N1 Vaccination Rates For Children By Parental Concerns about H1N1 Vaccine Safety and H1N1 Illness**



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2010

### Report Highlights

- **About one-half of parents worry that their children will get H1N1 flu; about two-thirds worry about safety of H1N1 vaccine.**
- **H1N1 vaccination is much less likely when parents worry more about vaccine safety (10%) than when parents worry more about H1N1 illness (56%).**

### Implications

These poll results indicate that parents' efforts to get H1N1 vaccine for their children are guided by their perceived risks of H1N1 illness versus the perceived risks of the vaccine. National disease patterns indicate that H1N1 flu has already been more deadly for children than seasonal flu, yet it appears that parents may not fully appreciate the potential severity of H1N1 illness.

Meanwhile, parents' concerns about safety of H1N1 vaccine run counter to the vaccine's track record of safety in clinical trials and in millions of doses given since October 2009. Public health and medical authorities will need to address safety concerns if they are to extend H1N1 vaccination to reach more children in 2010.

### Data Source

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Knowledge Networks, Inc, for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital via a method used in many published studies. The survey was administered January 1-18, 2010 to a randomly selected, stratified group of parents aged 18 and older (n=1,612) from the Knowledge Networks standing panel that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 75% among panel members contacted to participate. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 to 3 percentage points for the main analysis. For results based on subgroups, the margin of error is higher.

#### C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

**Director:** Matthew M. Davis, MD, MAPP

**Associate Director:** Sarah J. Clark, MPH

**Manager & Editor:** Dianne C. Singer, MPH

**Data Analyst:** Amy T. Butchart, MPH

**Contact us!** Email: [NPCH@med.umich.edu](mailto:NPCH@med.umich.edu)

[www.med.umich.edu/mott/research/chearnpoch.html](http://www.med.umich.edu/mott/research/chearnpoch.html)

This Report includes research findings from the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, which do not represent the opinions of the investigators or the opinions of the University of Michigan.

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