

## **2026 Davee Foundation Lecture and Resident Research Day**

### **Abstract**

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**Title: Combatting Vaccine Hesitancy in Parents and Promoting Flu Vaccination in Babies**

**Purpose:** This study aims to increase influenza vaccination rates in infants by addressing common concerns that underly vaccine-hesitancy and –refusal in parents. My study is based on findings from a 2020 study published in the Journal of Community Health. They analyzed survey responses from 904 Australian parents and found that having children prompted all parents to learn more about vaccines and four common themes of concern emerged: distrust of pharmaceutical and regulatory bodies, fear of vaccine side effects, concern about recommended vaccine schedules, and belief that vaccines had caused permanent injury to their child.

Vaccination rates in the pediatric population overall decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic and have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Influenza vaccination rates specifically have fallen every year since 2019, according to CDC data through April 26, 2025. This sadly corresponds with increasing hospitalization rates and deaths – 1 death in '20-'21, 49 in '21-'22, 187 in '22-'23, and 207 in '23-'24.

Vaccine hesitancy in parents is a significant contributor to decreased vaccination coverage in children. Therefore, improved understanding and strategies for combatting vaccine hesitancy in parents is critical to increasing vaccination rates and reducing pediatric morbidity and mortality from the flu.

**Methods:** I designed an informative handout with evidence-based responses to the four common concerns from vaccine-hesitant and -refusing parents described above. The information was presented in English and in Spanish and edited to be approachable and easy to understand. A physical copy was laminated and hung in a visible location in every clinical exam room at the Erie Family Health Center in Waukegan. All providers at this site were instructed to utilize this resource when discussing the infant flu vaccine with parents. The handout was digitally formatted to insert automatically into the After Visit Summary of every patient age 0-12 months. This allows us to track every patient who has received this counseling. At the end of the 2025-2026 flu season, a report of qualifying patients will be generated in Epic and vaccination rates in 6–12-month-olds who were eligible for their first flu vaccine will be calculated and compared to flu vaccination rates in the same population during the previous flu seasons.

**Results:** Data collection in progress