

## **Influenza Vaccination – Important Notice**

Effective 14 July 2008, every deploying USAP participant is required to receive an influenza vaccination prior to deployment. The National Science Foundation concluded that influenza resulted in a significant impact to operations and therefore all deploying personnel must receive a flu shot.

### **Please Review The Attached Documents:**

**\*\* Requires Signature and Return\*\*** The Read, Sign, Return - Influenza Vaccination form requires your signature and return to RPSC Medical prior to purchase of deployment airline tickets. *Sign and return the document immediately.*

For Your Information:

The Centers for Disease Control (CD) “What You Need To Know” Influenza Vaccine Guide: Inactivated Vaccine.

The Centers for Disease Control (CD) “What You Need To Know” Influenza Vaccine Guide: Live Vaccine.

### **Obtaining Flu Shots:**

1) Participants will be given flu shots in Denver at orientation, in Christchurch prior to departing for Antarctica, or upon arrival at Palmer Station.

OR

2) Participants may obtain a flu shot from their medical provider during the PQ process and submit the supporting documentation to RPSC Medical.

Below you will find Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding the Influenza Vaccination program. Once you have reviewed all the information, please contact your hiring manager or the Human Resources department for questions relating to your employment. For medical-based inquiries, please contact the Medical department at 1.800.688.8606 ext 3.

### **FAQs**

Q: Why do we have to take the flu shot to go to Antarctica?

A: A panel of medical consultants to the National Science Foundation recently reviewed health care in Antarctica. The report included the summary of two outbreaks of influenza at McMurdo during the 2007-2008 summer season. There was very significant impact on productivity and health care costs. The medical experts recommended that the vaccine should be given in order to prevent the likelihood of similar outbreaks in the future. The NSF accepted the recommendation and issued a directive making the immunizations mandatory.

Q: Will having the shot prevent me from getting the flu?

A: Not always. The vaccine is made up of three strains of influenza virus. There are many strains of “flu” viruses. Reports from all over the world are studied each year to predict the strains most likely to cause flu epidemics across different regions. The vaccine is 90% effective in protecting healthy young adults from illness when the vaccine strain is similar to the infecting strain. It is important for everyone to keep their immune systems healthy through regular exercise and good nutrition because the vaccine is less effective in preventing illness in older people and those that have diseases that reduce immunity. The “PQ” examinations are intended to prevent deployment of unhealthy people.

Q: How will I get the shot?

A: Ideally, you would get the shot from your personal physician as part of the “PQ” exam. However, the vaccine may not be available in the United States until late September, after many are on their way to Antarctica. The vaccine will also be given at the Denver HQ during deployment orientation, if available. The vaccine will be given in Christchurch if it is not available in the U.S. before deployment. It will be available at McMurdo, and given to the winter-over employees there. There is a one–two week period after getting the shot before full protection has developed, so the earlier in the deployment cycle it can be given, the better for you and your contacts.

Q: What if I’m allergic? Will I have a localized reaction?

A: If you have had a severe reaction to a flu shot in the past (severe reaction is throat, mouth or airway swelling, difficulty breathing, rash or hives), then bring documentation from the treating physician or emergency room. If you have a proven severe reaction to egg protein (same symptoms as above), then bring the report from your physician or allergist. People with previous severe reactions to the shot or to egg protein should not receive the shot. With proper documentation, you will be excused from the requirement. Localized reactions associated with the flu shot may include mild problems such as soreness, redness or swelling where the shot was given. These reactions have occurred less often as vaccine preparation has improved. They are generally not serious and do not justify exemption from the annual requirement for receiving the immunization.

Q: How can I learn more about the shots?

A: A Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) will be given to every employee prior to the shot. The VIS will explain in great detail the reasons for immunization, more about the vaccine, related benefits, risks, precautions and web sites for even greater information.

Remember to sign and return the attached Consent Form.

Thank you.

Emmett B. Ferguson MD, MPH – Medical Director  
RPSC Medical Department