



HEALTH

The Role of Retail Clinics in Vaccination Delivery in the U.S

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Background

Retail clinics, now a common fixture in national drug store chains and “big box” stores, such as Target, serve millions of Americans. Distinct from pharmacies that are often co-located in the same stores, retail clinics are staffed by nurse practitioners or physician assistants who diagnose and treat a fixed menu of acute conditions, provide preventive care, and increasingly provide care for select chronic conditions. The more than 1300 retail clinics currently operating across the U.S. are a promising venue in which to promote and administer vaccinations; however, little is known about the role they play in vaccination delivery. We aimed to describe the current role of retail clinics in the delivery of recommended vaccinations.

Methods

The three largest retail clinic operators in the U.S., MinuteClinic, TakeCare, and LittleClinic, provided de-identified clinic data for 2007-2009. These operators own 81% of retail clinics in the

U.S. We generated descriptive statistics on visit type, type of vaccination, patient age, and payment method.

Results

During the three year period between 2007 and 2009, there were 8.9 million retail clinic visits across the three largest retail clinic operators in the U.S. The number of visits in which one or more vaccinations were administered increased from 469,330 in 2007 to 1,952,610 in 2009. Visits in which vaccinations were administered accounted for 39.9%, 36.4%, and 42.0% of total visits in 2007, 2008, and 2009 respectively. Only a small number of vaccinations were administered during visits involving treatment of an illness or general medical exams. In 2009, vaccinations were also administered in 0.8% of acute care visits (n=18,807), 0.8% of chronic care visits (n=261), and 1.3% of general medical exams (n=2,497).

Although a variety of types of vaccinations were administered, the vast majority of vaccinations delivered in retail clinics were injectable influenza vaccinations (Table 1). In 2009, 1.8 million injectable influenza vaccinations (including seasonal and H1N1 vaccinations) were administered across the two largest retail clinic operators (94% of all vaccination visits). Pneumococcal vaccination was administered at 59,849 visits (3% of all vaccination visits). Though the majority of patients who received vaccinations were 18 or older (over 80% from 2007-2009) the fraction of vaccination visits for children and adolescents increased from 11.4% to 17.6% from 2007 to 2009.

Conclusions

Results suggests that retail clinics play a growing role in vaccination delivery in the U.S., and vaccinations represent a core component of the retail clinic business. Retail clinics potentially could deliver more vaccinations if they incorporated review of vaccination histories and counseled patients regarding the benefits of vaccination during acute care visits.

Table 1: Most Common Types of Vaccinations Administered at Retail Clinic Vaccination Visits*

Type of Vaccination Administered at Vaccination Visit	2007 # (%)	2008 # (%)	2009 # (%)
Influenza**	451,617 (96.2)	957,056 (94.5)	1,836,766 (94.1)
Injection***	447,360 (95.3)	951,524 (94.0)	1,806,985 (92.3)
Intranasal	0 (0)	5,355 (0.5)	8,641 (0.4)
Pneumococcal	11,467 (2.4)	30,415 (3.0)	59,489 (3.0)
Tetanus-containing vaccine^	9,306 (2.0)	23,538 (2.3)	33,729 (1.7)
Meningitis	1,385 (0.3)	3,416 (0.3)	4,679 (0.2)
Measles, mumps, and rubella	1,206 (0.3)	2,591 (0.3)	4,457 (0.2)
Hepatitis A	1,697 (0.4)	3,784 (0.4)	3,233 (0.2)
Hepatitis B	2,620 (0.6)	6,618 (0.7)	11,118 (0.6)
Human papillomavirus	223 (<0.1)	1,056 (0.1)	1,707 (0.1)
Polio	192 (<0.1)	563 (0.1)	329 (<0.1)

*Table reports data from the two largest retail clinic operators (representing 76% of all retail clinics in the U.S.) These clinics supplied both CPT codes and diagnosis codes to the study team.

**Includes both seasonal and H1N1 vaccinations in 2009 because there is no distinct diagnosis code for H1N1 vaccination.

***Several thousand influenza vaccinations could not be classified as injection or intranasal because records included a diagnosis code for influenza vaccination but no CPT code to indicate the specific type.

^Tetanus-containing vaccines include tetanus and diphtheria toxoids (Td) vaccine or tetanus toxoid, reduced diphtheria toxoid, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine.