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Continuous process improvement in vaccine delivery

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Vaccines are one of the greatest achievements in public health. However, critical evaluation and continuous process improvement are needed to ensure that vaccines are stored, handled and administered properly to avoid compromising the vaccine. Failure to do so will result in vaccine wastage with resultant cost implications, and may potentially expose people to disease and erode confidence in vaccination. A panel of the United States immunization experts from national immunization policy organizations; state and local immunization programs; healthcare practitioners; and, members of the vaccine industry convened to identify and evaluate challenges to vaccine delivery - from storage and handling through vaccine preparation and administration. A report of the first meeting identifying issues was recently published¹. The group's primary observation was that the unrecognized complexity of vaccine delivery posed a major challenge to appropriate delivery of vaccines. Proper training, storage, cold chain maintenance, handling, preparation, administration, and documentation were areas where continuous process improvement would benefit the immunization process.

A follow-up meeting was held to discuss possible solutions to identified challenges within each area of the vaccine delivery process, with an emphasis on education, training, oversight, and technology. The overarching goal was to simplify the complex process of vaccine delivery. Top priority short-term solutions included increasing awareness about unrecognized complexity, encouraging use of existing assets like current guidance and ready-to-administer vaccines, simplifying and standardizing packaging, and utilizing the recently launched Vaccine Error Reporting Program (VERP). Longer-term solutions included national standards and minimum core competency requirements, provider incentives, and integrating improved technology.

Biography

L.J Tan is the Chief Strategy Officer for the Immunization Action Coalition, which he joined January 1st, 2013. There, L.J is leading the IAC's new strategic direction on national immunization advocacy and policy development. Dr. Tan was recently elected onto the National Quality Forum's Adult Immunizations Expert Committee, onto the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Vaccine Study Group (EVASG), and serves as an editor for BMC Infectious Diseases and for Medscape Infectious Diseases. Dr. Tan co-founded (with the CDC and the NVPO), currently co-chairs the National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit, and has authored more than 40 peer-reviewed publications.

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