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October 27, 2009

Dear Registered Nurses:

As the influenza season begins, the American Nurses Association (ANA) calls on all registered nurses to get the seasonal influenza vaccine. After all, as nurses, we have an ethical obligation not only to protect ourselves, but also to protect our patients and our families from influenza illness. ANA has long emphasized to nurses that vaccination is one simple step that everyone should take.

Simultaneously, during the 2009-2010 influenza season, this nation is also facing a major health threat caused by the H1N1 virus. It is crucial that nurses also be vaccinated this year against H1N1 if we are to successfully limit illness and death in our patients, co-workers, and family members. Unlike seasonal influenza, no one has immunity to this new H1N1 strain, and while some groups may be more vulnerable to severe illness and death, we are all susceptible. This season presents immense challenges, as we deal with both seasonal influenza and the pandemic at the same time.

ANA urges nurses to lead the way to increasing vaccination rates among health care workers. The seasonal influenza vaccine rate among healthcare workers remains disappointingly low, below 50 percent.

When you go to get your seasonal influenza and H1N1 vaccines, bring a previously unvaccinated co-worker with you on your immunization visit. This is one way we can succeed in raising the vaccination rate among health care workers, and help ensure that they are healthy and on the job when most needed during a pandemic.

Remember that the H1N1 vaccine is simply a variation of the seasonal vaccine, and, given that the safety record of the seasonal vaccine is very good and adverse events are extremely rare, there is no reason to believe the H1N1 vaccine will be any different.

For background information on seasonal influenza and vaccination, see: www.nursingworld.org/SeasonalFluVaccine. To learn more about H1N1, including the vaccine, see: www.nursingworld.org/H1N1.

We appreciate what you do for your patients and to promote public health.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rebecca M. Patton'.

Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR
ANA President