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HARC Data Spotlights Low Regional Immunization Rates
Survey Results Show Vaccination Numbers To Be Alarming Low

(PALM DESERT, CA) – With immunization concerns heightened following the recent outbreak of “whooping cough” across Southern California, the Palm Desert-based Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) has published data regarding overall immunization rates in Eastern Riverside County. The numbers, which coincide with August being National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM), reveal the challenges the region faces.

For example, HARC, in its most recent survey, learned that 59% of valley adults, or approximately 323,000 residents, failed to receive a flu shot in the last 12 months. The findings also show 86.2% of Hispanic/Latino adult respondents report not getting a flu shot, whereas, only 47.9% of Caucasians reported not being vaccinated. Additionally, adults between the ages of 18 to 54 are much more likely to report not having had a flu shot.

While studying the rates of vaccination reminders sent to parents or caregivers regarding their children ages 0-5, HARC discovered that 30.2%, or 14,050 respondents reported they do not receive regular reminders from their doctor or clinic to immunize their child.

Glen Grayman, MD, Board President of HARC, stated, “The results suggest that we still have a long way to go in order to ensure that people are protecting themselves and their families through immunizations. However, I am hopeful that with increased awareness, our residents will take the necessary steps to get vaccinated.”

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According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), despite considerable public health immunization advancements, a significant number of individuals across the United States still die from vaccine-preventable diseases every year. For example, an estimated 36,000 adults die annually from influenza across the nation.

Many healthcare practitioners believe a contributing factor to lower immunization rates stems from the persistent controversy regarding the relationship the MMR vaccine and autism. In a 2008 *Immunization Action Coalition* article Ari Brown, MD, FAAP, a pediatric physician, provided compelling evidence that the MMR vaccine does not cause autism. In addition, a major 2004 study released by the Institute of Medicine also refutes the link between the two. Nevertheless, some parents believe that spacing out their child's vaccines in an "alternative schedule" is safer than a standardized regimen.

The CDC recommends beginning vaccinations soon after birth and continuing them throughout life to protect families. Moreover, the CDC recommends the use of Immunization Information Systems (IIS) by healthcare organizations. The IIS, a computerized system that collects immunization information on children to generate vaccination reminders for healthcare providers, dramatically improves vaccination coverage rates.

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About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 30 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in eastern Riverside County every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501©3 organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities who contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 404-1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.harcddata.org.