

# The case for mandatory vaccination for healthcare workers - again

By ACSH Staff — January 29, 2014



We are reaching the height of flu season, and the [percentage](#)

[of](#) <sup>[1]</sup>healthcare workers who have gotten the flu vaccination remains unacceptably low. The goal of public health authorities is to vaccinate about 95 percent of healthcare workers in order to not only keep them healthy, but also to protect those patients with whom they interact. Furthermore, according to Saskatchewan Health Minister Dustin Duncan, It makes it harder for health officials, it makes it harder for me as the health minister to encourage people to get their vaccinations when they only see half of healthcare workers getting them.

His numbers are spot on. In the UK, 46 percent of healthcare workers received the flu vaccine. Those numbers are similar in both Canada and the United States. But, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, if employers recommend vaccination, that number increases to 70 percent and if employers mandate vaccination, it increases to 89 percent.

ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan comments, This seems like a no-brainer to me. And we're not just talking about the flu vaccine. However, in terms of that vaccine, it's not just the healthcare workers we're concerned about, but also the patients. It's irresponsible for these workers to refuse to get a vaccine that could potentially protect their patients. To those who assert their right to decide what they put into their bodies, I say, Of course you have that right...but you then relinquish the privilege of taking care of sick and vulnerable patients. Find a job away from them and you can avoid the flu shot. But why?

And here's [another reason](#) <sup>[2]</sup> you may want to consider getting vaccinated if you have not already obtained protection there is a nationwide shortage of IV saline solution caused by an unprecedented mismatch between the supply and the increased demand to some extent exacerbated by hospitalizations due to the ongoing flu epidemic. In order to cope with these shortages, hospitals are reserving their supply for the most seriously ill, as well as using substitute products.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom, whose 2011 [New York Post op-ed](#) <sup>[3]</sup> entitled Running out of Common Drugs, says The FDA, which has been bragging about how they are doing this and that to reduce

the drug shortage, must be puzzled. Although the number of shortages has dropped over the last year or so, if you take a look at the list of drugs in short supply in 2011, there it is saline..

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**Links**

[1] [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/lawrence-solomon/canada-vaccinations\\_b\\_4593168.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/lawrence-solomon/canada-vaccinations_b_4593168.html)

[2] [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-01-28/lifestyle/sns-rt-us-saline-shortage-20140128\\_1\\_shortage-healthcare-providers-saline](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-01-28/lifestyle/sns-rt-us-saline-shortage-20140128_1_shortage-healthcare-providers-saline)

[3]

[http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/running\\_out\\_of\\_common\\_drugs\\_vW3vnAYadm2qJ7eL3hjYO](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/running_out_of_common_drugs_vW3vnAYadm2qJ7eL3hjYO)