

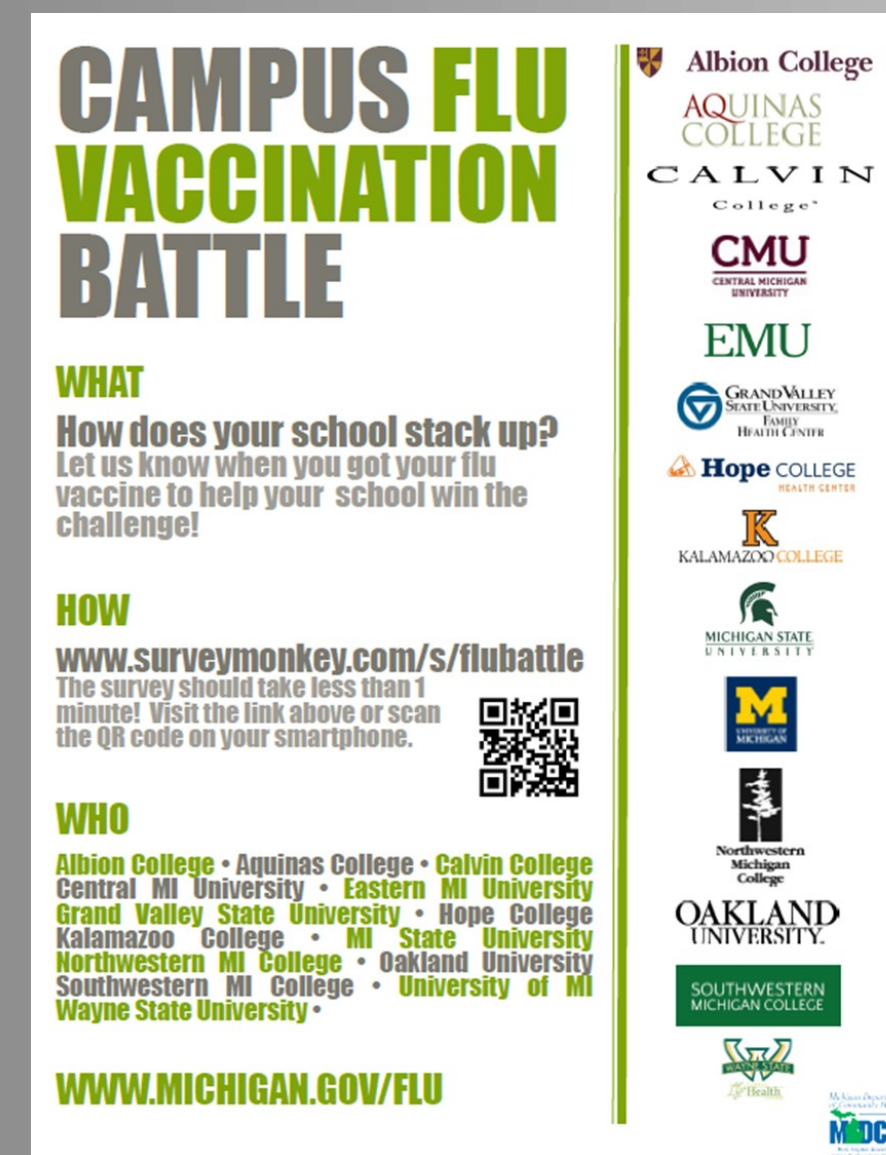
Michigan's 2014-15 College and University Flu Vaccination Challenge

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Background

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Alana's Foundation implemented a new program with the goal of increasing flu vaccination uptake among college-aged young adults. The first College and University Flu Vaccination Challenge, modeled after the American Red Cross Blood Battle between rival universities, was implemented during the 2014-15 flu season. Participation in the Flu Challenge was voluntary, and 14 public and private institutions enrolled in the pilot year.



Challenge poster with QR code and link to student self-report survey

Overview of Problem

The 2013-14 flu season hit young adults hard in Michigan, and several previously healthy young adults died from influenza-related complications. According to data from the Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR), flu coverage levels among individuals 18-24 years of age were very low – only 10.1% during the 2013-14 flu season. College and university students are at a unique risk of contracting the flu due to lifestyle factors. Close contact such as dorms, classrooms, public transportation, parties, and sports events make flu especially easy to spread at college. Further, lack of sleep, not eating healthy, and not exercising regularly can weaken the immune system, making these young adults more vulnerable to the flu.

Significance

College-aged young adults represent the next generation of workforce and families/new parents. By making annual flu vaccination a priority during college years, it is our hope that these young adults will be more likely to accept all recommended vaccines for themselves and their families throughout their lifetimes. The health care industry is one of the largest employers in Michigan, so many college students will go on to become future health care personnel. Beyond increasing flu vaccination rates, this campaign aimed to get students talking about the flu and to generate noise on college campuses about the importance of flu vaccination, even for healthy young adults.



Pictured above: print materials available through the Challenge

Challenge Activities

- Expected enrolled schools to enter all flu vaccines administered into MCIR, MI's immunization registry
- Shared College and University Flu Vaccination Toolkit with targeted strategies to reach college-aged young adults
- Disseminated posters and print materials to enrolled schools, pharmacies, and local health departments to increase awareness of the Flu Challenge
- Alana's Foundation offered schools the opportunity to apply for grant funds to purchase flu vaccine and offer it free of charge to uninsured and underinsured students
- Collaborated with bioCSL, Kyne, Families Fighting Flu, and Alana's Foundation to develop and distribute newspaper ad and PSA
- Analyzed the self-reported survey data; students were encouraged to self-report they received flu vaccine, vaccines given at any location were included to promote the immunization neighborhood concept
- Reported bi-weekly survey results to enrolled schools to encourage competition amongst rivals
- Communicated to enrolled schools via monthly webinars, newsletters, e-mail announcements, and website
- Developed social media message templates for enrolled schools; campaign hashtags #fluchallenge and #fluselfie
- Announced Challenge leaders throughout the campaign and winners via social media; tagged enrolled schools to get the attention of top administrators
- Announced winners via press release during National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) in December 2014
- Awarded winners with traveling trophies donated by Alana's Foundation



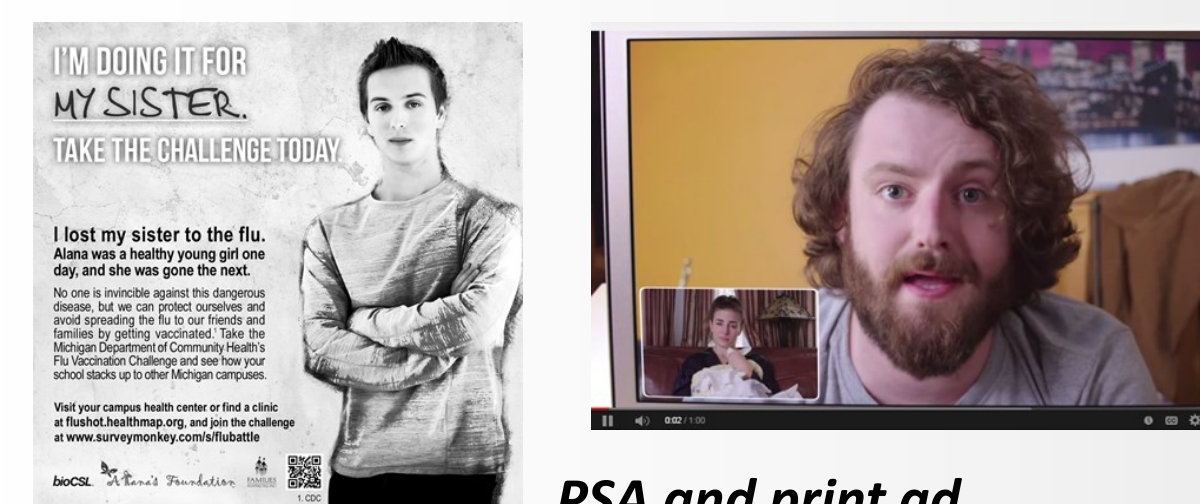
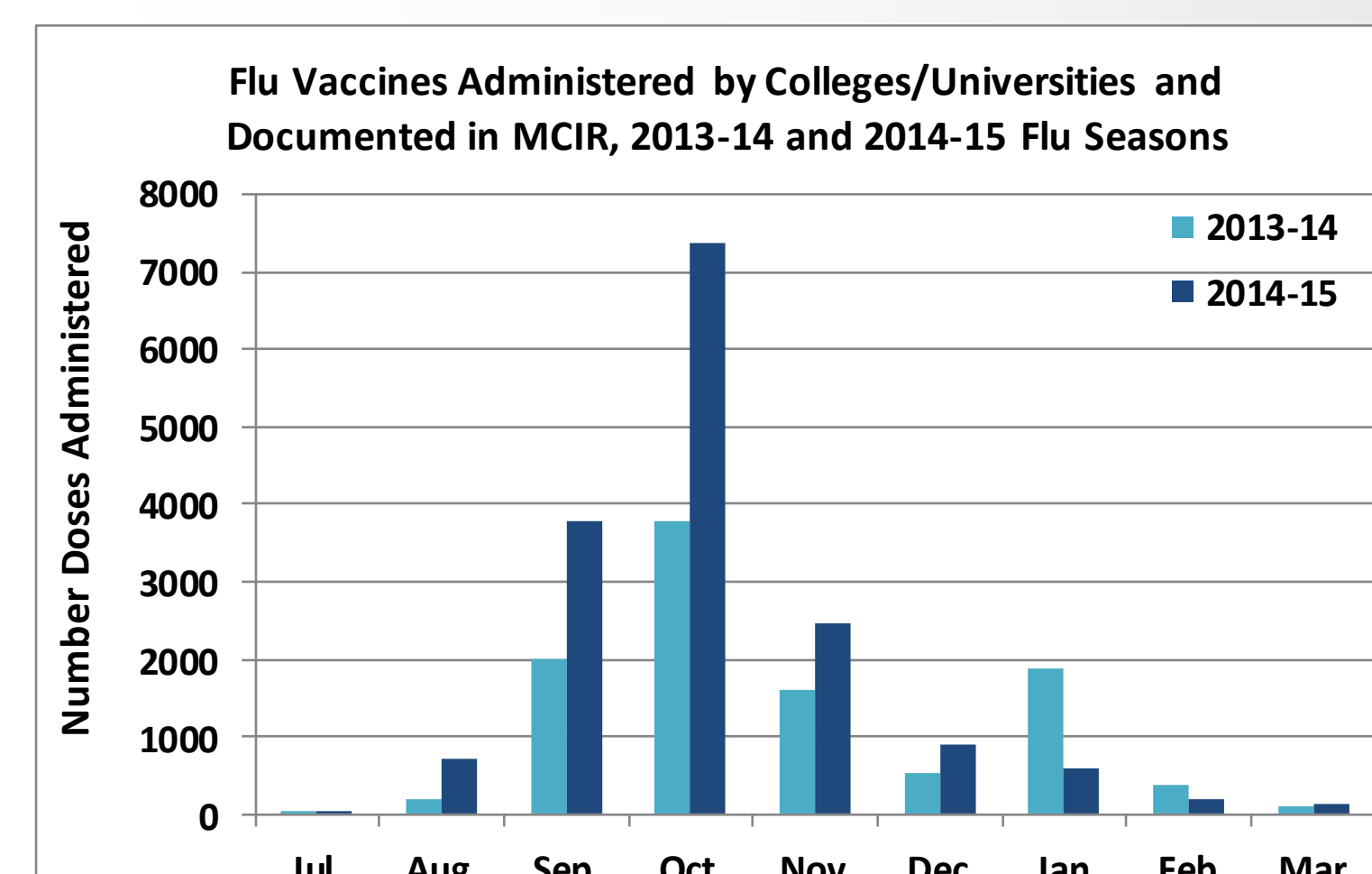
Challenge Winners: Representatives from Wayne State University, Michigan State University, Hope College



Challenge Trophies for Small, Medium, and Large Institutions Donated by Alana's Foundation in memory of Alana Yaksich

Results

- 5,717 individuals (average age 23.5 years) self-reported that they received flu vaccination
- The 14 enrolled school health centers entered 12,953 flu vaccinations (average patient age 30.3 years) into MCIR from July 1 to December 31, 2014
 - 60% increase from the same time period in the 2013-14 flu season (8,098 vaccine doses)
- The 14 enrolled school health centers entered 13,914 flu vaccinations (average patient age 28.5 years) into MCIR from July 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015
 - 33% increase from the same time period in the 2013-14 flu season (10,468 vaccine doses)
- Print ad ran in 11 of the 14 school newspapers, reached more than 90,000 students
- Mom Knows Best PSA had over 22,700 views with 75% of viewers in the young adult target demographic
- PSA further distributed by immunization community reaching more than 100 million individuals.



PSA and print ad

Late Season Activities

Recognizing that flu vaccination efforts should not cease in December, MDHHS encouraged schools to persevere and use innovative strategies to continue promoting flu vaccine and vaccinating their students in January and beyond as a "late season" vaccination push. Additional awards were given to schools with the most flu vaccine doses overall in MCIR, the most improvement in flu vaccine doses in MCIR from 2013-14 to 2014-15, the most flu vaccine doses in MCIR from January to March, and to one school for the best innovative "late season" vaccination campaign.



Wayne State University nursing students running "late season" flu clinic

Conclusions

College and university rivalries in Michigan run deep. Overall, this campaign represented an innovative way to work with new partners to increase lagging coverage levels. The goal is to make the Flu Challenge an annual event in Michigan, that grows successively each year. This pilot program offered a tremendous opportunity to collaborate with organizations with similar goals (pharmacies, community vaccinators, community groups).



Left to right: Bob Swanson (Director, MDHHS Division of Immunization), Christie Bellak (Wayne State University), Jennifer Strohmeyer (Michigan State University), Cindy Sabo (Hope College), and JoAnna Yaksich and Zachary Yaksich (Alana's Foundation)

Limitations

- For the pilot year, MDHHS was unsure of the extent of schools' interest
- MDHHS had no funding to promote the Flu Challenge; this was overcome through the external collaboration which funded the development of a print ad and PSA
- Flu vaccination is competing priority at university health centers, often not getting the funding or staff needed to undergo a successful campaign
- Up to each school to promote the importance of flu vaccine on their campus
- Cost is significant barrier to young adults, a population in which it is already difficult to change health behaviors; not all school health centers bill private insurance, students may face vaccine and administration costs

Resources & Contact Information

All Challenge resources (toolkit, posters, newsletters, webinar slides, rules and regulations, press release, social media messages, etc.) can be downloaded at www.michigan.gov/flu.

For questions or comments, contact:

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