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NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 27, 2010

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Utah Public Health Nurse Wins ANA Immunity Award for Tdap Vaccine Promotion
Education Efforts Influence Hospitals to Update Policy for New Mothers

SILVER SPRING, MD – Audrey Stevenson, whose efforts to promote the Tdap vaccine providing immunization for three serious diseases at public health clinics resulted in a new protocol to offer the vaccine to postpartum women prior to discharge from several Utah hospitals, garnered the American Nurses Association (ANA) Immunity Award for October.

The monthly Immunity Award is a component of ANA's Bringing Immunity to Every Community project. A cooperative agreement between ANA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the project focuses on maximizing nurses' role in increasing vaccination rates and reducing incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases. The project seeks to increase nurses' knowledge and competency in immunization, encourage nurses to be vaccinated, and position nurses as leading advocates for immunization among peers, patients, and the public.

A 25-year public health nurse, Stevenson, division director of Family Health Services for the Salt Lake Valley Health Department, developed a program in 2009 to promote the vaccine for tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap) for new parents. Stevenson's public health advocacy, along with her team of health care professionals, is especially timely, with the outbreak of pertussis (whooping cough) in California causing the death of 10 infants and nearly 6,000 confirmed cases of illness. The program educates patients, nurses and physicians at the department's six public health clinics. She also incorporated a process for asking new parents visiting for pediatric services about their Tdap status, and offering the vaccine if they lack immunization.

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The University of Utah Hospital and several Intermountain Healthcare facilities, noting the increase in Tdap vaccination rates at the clinics, instituted a similar effort for new mothers.

Stevenson also helped implement a “cocooning” project to protect infants at two prenatal and pediatrics clinics, ensuring that all teens and adults who will be caring for a newborn are adequately vaccinated. Education and reminders about the importance of receiving the Tdap vaccination before bringing the newborn home from the hospital occurs during ultrasound appointments.

Stevenson, whose doctoral dissertation focused on investigating factors that affected immunization rates in the Salt Lake region, also directed the Cocooning Project at one public health center, educating physicians, residents and medical students about the importance of Tdap vaccination of families to protect newborns.

Stevenson incorporates immunization into all aspects of public health clinic services, such as ensuring that all women who receive a home health nursing visit are asked about their immunization status and requiring the review of the vaccine record of every child under age 2 at each visit to a Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program Clinic in Salt Lake County.

Registered nurses can apply for the ANA Immunity Award, either through self-nomination or nomination by a peer, online through Bringing Immunity to Every Community’s website, <http://www.ANAimmunize.org>, a one-stop shop for resources nurses need to be competent, educated advocates for immunizations.

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The ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent member nurses associations, its organizational affiliates, and its workforce advocacy affiliate, the Center for American Nurses. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.