News Release

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Immunization registries not immune to COVID-19 challenges, but succeeding nonetheless

Registries processing record levels of data to determine where to send COVID-19 vaccines, set up vaccination clinics, and focus additional provider enrollment

WASHINGTON, DC – The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged public health systems nationwide, including local and state immunization registry programs. Immunization registries, or immunization information systems (IIS), have been around for 20+ years and are secure, tried-and-true systems that capture immunization data at the local and state levels. Chances are, if you've received an immunization from a health care provider in your city or state, your immunization information is in your jurisdiction's IIS.

While IIS programs have not been immune to challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, they've certainly risen to the occasion, especially given the record amount of data flowing through each IIS daily and from many different immunization partners, such as pharmacies.

According to STChealth, a longtime immunization exchange partner that processes immunization records for over 60 percent of the retail pharmacy market, pharmacies have captured 25 million immunizations in over 3 months since authorization of the first COVID-19 vaccine. Of the immunizations captured by pharmacies, 90 percent were reported to and received by their jurisdiction's IIS without issue, while the remaining messages required some manual intervention to complete processing.

Michael L. Popovich, CEO of STChealth, indicates that, "Data is reported to IIS within 24 hours after a patient is immunized." He says, "Partnerships built over the last 30 years between vaccine providers, pharmacies, and data exchange networks have proven worthy of the effort to report and collect every COVID-19 vaccine being given."

IIS programs' success hinges on their strong connections with public and private health care partners. Pre-pandemic, IIS had established connections with over 117,000 health

systems, pharmacies, and other data partners, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's annual report on IIS. That number has grown exponentially since the pandemic began. These connections allow IIS to capture and consolidate administered doses in real-time for a significant portion of the population. That's impressive during normal times and even more remarkable now.

"In this unprecedented effort, IIS have supported the key decisions made to get vaccines to the right places and the right people," says Claire Hannan, Executive Director at the Association of Immunization Managers. "These systems are doing exactly what they do every day, just on a much bigger scale. They've succeeded for so long because they can leverage relationships and connections and are proven to be trusted sources of immunization data."

IIS programs are also sharing redacted data with the federal government, which has provided a new, nationwide view into immunization coverage. In addition, IIS in many jurisdictions are supporting their state COVID-19 data dashboards and using the data to target areas of their states with lower vaccine uptake. This important data is also used to determine where to send vaccine, where to set up mass vaccination clinics, where to focus additional provider enrollment, and more. In other words, it's more than just shots and dates.

As the number of COVID-19 vaccinations rapidly increases (around 3 million shots are currently given each day), IIS programs are working to expand their capacity and processing power. They've seen slight delays in processing and some performance challenges, but the systems are working well and as designed. "It's impressive when you consider the increased volume of immunizations and new partners, on top of jurisdictions supporting routine immunizations," says Rebecca Coyle, Executive Director at the American Immunization Registry Association. "The country can be assured that IIS programs are working tirelessly to make sure the right information is being securely captured."

Find out more about these organizations:
- American Immunization Registry Association
- Association of Immunization Managers
- STChealth. For a behind-the-scenes look at what it really means to report immunizations to an IIS, check out STChealth's VaxBytes site—a real-time look into the power and complexity of immunization data exchange.

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