



# Quest Physician Update

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Gail Amundson, MD, FACP  
CEO, Quality Quest for Health of Illinois

## Transforming Healthcare- Together

Dear Colleagues,

The Illinois Department of Public Health is reporting “widespread” flu activity in the state, marking the start of peak flu season. Thanks to the efforts of hospitals in our region, central Illinois patients have more protection. That’s because more healthcare workers are getting flu shots.

Transmission of flu in the healthcare setting is a substantial safety concern that places patients at risk. That’s partly because the protection provided by vaccination is reduced in hospitalized patients who are often elderly or immunocompromised. Studies find that vaccination of 100% of employees reduces the risk of flu in hospitalized patients by 43%. Fewer patients will become ill and fewer will die from this preventable illness.

Nationally, compliance rates have been low. A 2009 RAND survey found only 53% of healthcare personnel reported receipt of influenza vaccination during the 2008– 2009 influenza season. In addition, 39% of healthcare personnel stated they had no intention of getting vaccinated even with the heightened concern surrounding the H1N1 pandemic. The rate was 44.8% in the 2003–2004 season and 49% in 2007– 2008. Low rates of compliance place patients at risk and are unacceptable.

Quality Quest began tracking the percentage of hospital employees immunized last season and reporting it on our website [www.QualityQuest.org](http://www.QualityQuest.org). I am delighted to report that local rates exceeded the national number last year, AND, rates have improved at eight of eleven participating hospitals. Our current goal is for all employees to be immunized for the seasonal flu before the end of the 2010-11 flu season, unless they have a medical or religious reason not to participate. We will continue to post updates through mid-March.

Hospital employee vaccinations in this region are currently voluntary. The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America recommends annual influenza vaccination be a condition of both initial and continued employment and professional privileges. Hospitals that have adopted this policy have immunizations rates of 98 to 100 percent.

Thank you for all you do to make patient care better and safer. Together, we are transforming healthcare.

Respectfully,

