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The Vaccines and Medications in Pregnancy Surveillance System (VAMPSS) is a national pregnancy outcomes, public-private research project, coordinated by the American Academy of Asthma, Allergy, & Immunology (AAAAI), designed to conduct observational studies about medication and vaccine safety in pregnancy. The VAMPSS investigators have focused their efforts on influenza vaccines, antiviral medications, and asthma medications, all of which can significantly affect the health and well-being of pregnant and lactating women and their babies. The system, operational for more than ten years now, is positioned and ready to study other drugs as well.

The VAMPSS team has accomplished important work already. VAMPSS studies of the 2009 pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine and subsequent seasonal flu vaccines have found reassuring evidence of their safety during pregnancy. Data analysis found that women vaccinated during pregnancy were no more likely to experience miscarriage, have a baby born with a birth defect, or have a baby born smaller than normal compared with those who did not receive a vaccination. However, it is estimated that fewer than 50% of pregnant women follow federal health authorities' recommendation that they receive the influenza vaccine. Increased support for VAMPSS studies would allow us to expand on our findings to support federal efforts to encourage pregnant women to get the flu vaccine.

The results of VAMPSS studies are shared with AAAAI's 6,500 members via a multilayered communications campaign. As allergist/immunologists care for women who are pregnant or capable of becoming pregnant, they are in a position to counsel these patients on the benefits of influenza vaccines. This is particularly important for patients with asthma, who are at higher risk of experiencing severe influenza symptoms. Indeed VAMPSS was established with the support of the AAAAI because of the prevalence of asthma, and the importance of providing appropriate safety information to pregnant moms for the management of their asthma for improved healthcare outcome for themselves and their babies.

Communications to AAAAI members provide information on VAMPSS study findings through email, member newsletters, and the AAAAI's two scientific journals. Patient education materials provided by the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS) are distributed to our members and others by the AAAAI and the MotherToBaby team, a service of OTIS. In addition to a workshop at the AAAAI Annual Meeting each year, the VAMPSS team has held educational webinars for many health care provider groups including primary care and other specialty physicians, allied health professionals, and pharmacists.

The VAMPSS Independent Advisory Committee includes representatives from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Society for Maternal and Fetal Medicine, and the American Thoracic Society, which significantly expands the impact of our physician outreach efforts.

The VAMPSS team thanks the PRGLAC for the opportunity to submit comments to this meeting. We share your attention and focus on communicating with health care professionals about the importance of research on the impact of drugs and medications in pregnant and lactating women. We have supported the development and implementation of the Pregnancy and Lactation Labeling Rule and continue to reach out to health care providers in other specialties to improve communication between providers and their patients on these important issues. We have a proven track record and would welcome opportunities to participate in further discussions and efforts in our shared goals to improve patient and public information on these issues.

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