



Limitations of Vermont IMR Reports

The Vermont Immunization Registry (IMR) is a confidential, computerized system for maintaining immunization records, designed, developed, and is operated by the Vermont Department of Health. It was first made available to providers in July, 2004. The need for a central repository for immunization information is essential, as by two years of age, over 20 percent of children in the U.S. have seen more than one healthcare provider, resulting in scattered medical records.

The advantage of using the IMR for immunization data is that unlike survey information, it is much more comprehensive, and is not subject to selection bias. The IMR shares the database with several other Department of Health programs, including Vital Records. All Vermont births since 1909 have been added to the database, and new births are added within a matter of days. As is the case with any large database, the IMR has its limitations. It can be very difficult to keep up with the residences of all these individuals, resulting in a larger population base in the registry than actually live in the state of Vermont. As a result, our denominator can be too large, and this is especially true for older age groups. Vaccine Coverage Reports for 2-3 year olds, for instance, may include some records for patients who have moved out of state, but reports for teens are likely to include many more.

As of June 2014, 123 of 188 Vermont primary care practices (65.4%) enter immunizations into the registry, either directly or via electronic reporting. The percentage of practices utilizing the registry is continually growing, but some practices, especially those in specific counties (Lamoille, Rutland, and Windsor) and those serving primarily adult patients do not report all the immunizations they administer to the IMR. Some of these holes are filled by insurer-reported data, but not all. This can lead to incomplete records for some individuals.

The IMR receives few immunization records for Vermont residents from outside the state of Vermont, causing a further possibility of incomplete records for those individuals who may seek care in another state, particularly those in Windsor County.

Finally, immunizations administered earlier than 2000 to persons over age 18 are rarely captured in the IMR. While it is possible to record this information in the IMR, many of these records are simply lost. Through the Vermont Immunization Registry, we are working towards a system where immunization records are complete, accurate, and available to patients, parents, and health care providers who need them to deliver appropriate health care. For further information, please contact the Vermont Immunization Registry Manager at (802) 951-4094.

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