

## Leveraging community pharmacies to expand access to vaccinations

**Michael S. Taitel**

Walgreen Co., USA

Community pharmacies are uniquely positioned to increase vaccination rates in the United States. A recent survey of public health leaders identified pharmacists as playing a pivotal role in vaccine administration and pandemic planning. Pharmacies may be especially effective in immunizing high-risk, older adults who are more likely to utilize pharmacy services for prescription medication.<sup>1</sup> As the largest national pharmacy chain in the United States, Walgreens has increased coverage levels for vaccine-preventable diseases and improved the health of the nation. Through its broad immunization programs, Walgreens has achieved this goal by: (1) establishing a nationwide capacity to vaccinate patients, (2) improving the process of vaccine administration, and (3) implementing innovative vaccination programs to expand access and convenience throughout the United States, including underserved communities. We will discuss the outcomes of several studies on these innovative programs. For example, a study on access demonstrates that a large proportion of community pharmacy patients receive vaccinations during evening, weekend, and holiday hours when traditional vaccine providers are unavailable. An investigation of the impact of food oasis pharmacies show that these “healthy” destinations near food deserts can increase the rate of influenza vaccination among pharmacy patients. Finally, a pharmacist-led meningitis vaccination program expanded convenient access to immunization services to assist college students and increased the proportion of vaccinations provided in medically underserved areas. By supporting these initiatives, the pharmacist actively functions as a healthcare provider, thereby transforming the role of the pharmacy into a destination for health and wellness.

### Biography

As Director of Clinical Outcomes & Analytics at Walgreens, Dr. Taitel is responsible for developing outcomes research studies on medication adherence, immunizations, and other health and wellness innovations. He offers insights into conducting behavioral and clinical research in applied settings. He often presents at national forums and is the author of numerous peer-reviewed articles. Dr. Taitel holds a doctorate in experimental health psychology from Ohio University and a master's degree in clinical psychology from Bowling Green State University. He is a member of Academy Health, the American Psychological Association, and ISPOR.

[michael.taitel@walgreens.com](mailto:michael.taitel@walgreens.com)