

The Medical Manager's 2013 Flu Season Update

*Oh, hello #Flu, you're a little early this year:
sick.io/ksxfm*

– Sickweather (@sickweather) October 19, 2012

The tweet above was sent out by a very interesting start up named **Sickweather** on October 19th of last year. Sickweather analyzes data from Twitter and Facebook to determine potential public health concerns by listening to the things people post on social media. If a lot of people are posting about coughing, sneezing or other symptomatic behavior, you could make the assumption that increased disease activity is more likely in the area. The tweet welcoming flu season early was not an ironclad prediction, announcement, or warning but six weeks later the Centers for Disease Control issued a press release titled **“U.S. Flu Season off to Early Start.”**

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The 2012-2013 flu season is shaping up to be “moderate to severe” with 47 states reporting **“widespread geographic influenza activity”** to the CDC. Outside of the Pandemic

2009-2010 “Swine Flu” season, the reporting of Influenza Like Illness (or ILI) to care providers this year is at levels we have not seen since 2003-2004. Although reports point to this year’s season being at or near it’s peak, we thought it would be a great time to remind our readers and clients about some of the tools and resources you have at your disposal.



Protecting your Staff

- If your staff are rusty on basic flu information you can find a wealth of information for providers at the **CDC** and the **Flu.gov** websites to catch up on basics and preparation measures.
- Rule Number One: **IF THEY ARE SICK THEY HAVE TO GO HOME.** Sick providers and employees are powerless to help patients.
- A stronger flu season is a good time to review your staffing and preparedness plans both for **pandemics specifically** and **disaster prep in general.**

Protecting your Patients

- If you provide primary care, you are already probably dispensing the most common and effective advice against the flu: vaccination, and prevention, but patients can also be directed to more resources on their own. Tell them to check out of the information available on **flu shots** and **staying healthy** at Flu.gov for further research.
- Remember who is most susceptible to flu-based fatalities and hospitalizations: the young, the elderly, and the already sick. Make sure your vulnerable patients get the information they need up front. If you don’t offer flu shots at your facility, make sure they can find

somewhere that does close by.

Protecting Your Revenue Cycle

- Make sure your billing and coding departments are up on this years **Flu Shot billing codes**.
- With the 1st of the year having already rolled over, many of your patients will have new calendar-year deductibles, co-pays and other patient responsibilities. If you haven't already, maybe now is the time to start a **"Credit Card on File"** Program – **and we'd love to help!**

*What other ways do you "flu-proof" your practice each year?
Tell us your tips in the comments below!*