Parents well-intentioned but reluctant to vaccinate kids against H1N1

Rada Rouse

A LACK of “visible victims” of last year’s swine flu pandemic likely contributed to parental ambivalence about vaccinating their young children, a researcher says.

Dr Julie Leask, from the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, found in a survey conducted late last year that more than half of parents were undecided about vaccinating their children and only 23% intended to do it.

In Australia’s first study on caregivers’ intentions to vaccinate against H1N1, caregivers of babies and children attending 16 long daycare centres in Sydney were found to be highly motivated by GPs’ recommendations to vaccinate, and by a vaccine being included in the routine schedule.

However, 54% of the “mostly highly educated” parents were unsure what to do about the H1N1 vaccine, 22% had decided against using it and only three children had received it.

“A number of things were going on which contributed to parents’ reluctance to vaccinate,” Dr Leask said, citing a debate about the safety of multidose vials and a prevailing belief the pandemic was mild.

“Even though children died, none of those deaths became publicly reported case studies... so there [were] no visible victims,” she said.

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