



September 11, 2012

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201
Attn: Dori Salcido
Acting Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs

Dear Ms. Salcido:

On behalf of the more than 50,000 physicians and medical student members of the Texas Medical Association, the Texas Chapter of the American College of Physicians, the Texas Pediatric Society, and the Texas Academy of Family Physicians, we commend the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for providing accessible and timely information for the public on the seasonal influenza including specific action an individual can take to prevent influenza.

We recently learned, however, that the current HHS webpages for the public on seasonal influenza do not acknowledge the medical home as the first place to seek vaccination for seasonal influenza. "Vaccination and Vaccine Safety" as well as other HHS webpages direct the public to a Flu Vaccine Finder. The Flu Vaccine Finder appears to be populated primarily with freestanding and grocery store pharmacies that provide the influenza vaccine.

For years Texas physicians have promoted the medical home as the most effective way to ensure quality, coordinated care that includes evidence-based preventive health, and vaccinations in particular, for our patients. Our associations are leaders in Texas in promoting timely, accessible vaccination for all Texans. In a large state with a complex health care system and millions of uninsured people, the physician's office and medical home are still where most Texans get their vaccinations.

While Flu Vaccine Finder provides good information for those who do not have a medical home, we strongly recommend that the underlined text below or similar text be added to the HHS webpage www.flu.gov/prevention-vaccination (and similar webpages) to first direct individuals to their physician's office and medical home:

Where can I get the vaccine?

Contact your physician's office to get your flu shot, or you can use the Flu Vaccine Finder below to find a flu vaccine location near you this [flu season](#). The 2012-2013 vaccine is now available.



Flu Vaccine Finder Find flu clinics near you

Everyone six months of age and older needs a flu vaccine.

Enter Zip Code

powered by HealthMap

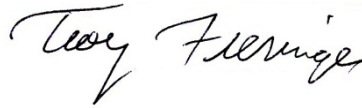
Additionally, our physicians have advocated for a strong state immunization registry to maintain accurate information on each individual's vaccinations. Unlike medical homes, pharmacies do not routinely use the Texas immunization registry, which is an important surveillance tool for public health and for physicians who must know about each vaccination each of their patients has received. In our state, a vaccination provided at a pharmacy typically is not reported to the state's immunization registry.

We are encouraged by HHS' efforts to provide clear information to the public, and we support a strong public and private collaboration to promote awareness and use of preventive care. We recommend that the medical home be considered in all HHS public communications relating to preventive care. This will go far to ensure we are all sharing similar messages and that our patients have clear information on how to access both preventive and medical care.

Sincerely,



Michael E. Speer, MD, President
Texas Medical Association



Troy Fiesinger, MD, President
Texas Academy of Family Physicians



Stephen E. Whitney, MD, President
Texas Pediatric Society



Felicia Austin-Tolliver, MD, FACP, President
American College of Physicians, Texas Chapter