

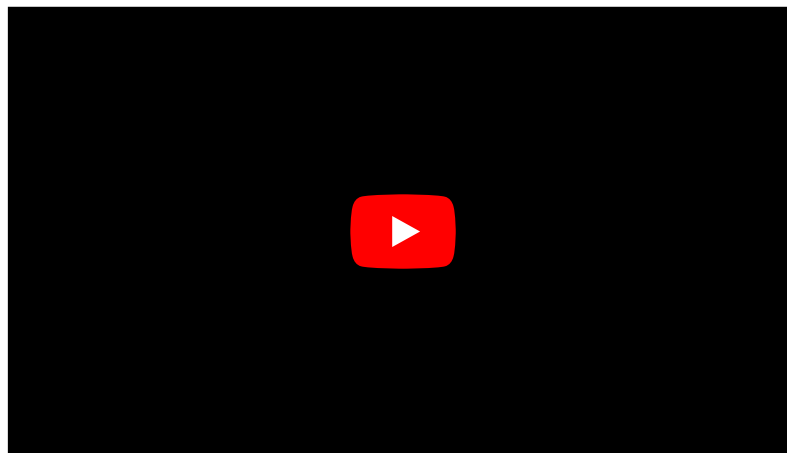
Don't let vaccine conversations get you down: Tips for talking with parents

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Editor's note: *The 2018 AAP National Conference & Exhibition will take place from Nov. 2-6 in Orlando.*

You've explained the research. You've cited statistics. You've appealed to emotions. And still, you can't seem to convince some parents to immunize their children. So now when a parent refuses a vaccine, you may simply move on.

Don't give up!

That's the message Kenneth Hempstead, M.D., FAAP, plans to convey during an interactive group forum titled "Immunizations: Communication Without Confrontation" from 2-3:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 3 (I1092) and again from 8:30-10 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 4 (I2038) in room W224E of the convention center.

Dr. Hempstead has been taking a different tack with tough vaccine conversations in his role as immunization champion and communication consultant at The Permanente Medical Group in Roseville, Calif.

"A lot of our program gets away from the traditional educational component and points to some reasons why that isn't very effective," Dr. Hempstead said.

He also has been taking his show on the road, teaching communication skills to pediatricians participating in AAP immunization quality improvement projects.

He will share these techniques during the session he is leading with Katrina N. Saba, M.D., FAAP, a member of the AAP Council on Community Pediatrics and chief of pediatrics, The Permanente Medical Group in Oakland, Calif.

“These are old tools but hadn’t ever been specifically brought to bear on this challenging vaccine discussion,” Dr. Hempstead said.

After a didactic presentation, Drs. Hempstead and Saba will show videos where actors demonstrate the techniques. Then, attendees will partner up and practice what they’ve seen.

“There are some simple and very quick techniques that they can very quickly incorporate into their practices without being a communications expert,” Dr. Hempstead said.

Feedback from physicians who have attended his trainings has been positive, he added. Once they realize they don’t have to argue with parents and endure unpleasant conversations, they gain confidence. Even if they don’t persuade the parents to vaccinate at that visit, they won’t dread the next encounter.

“By focusing on the relationship and focusing on the rapport-building, we’re playing the long game,” Dr. Hempstead said. “And by creating a more pleasant conversation, the door might stay open for the next time that we see them.”

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