BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS
DISPELLING MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENZA VACCINE

BARRIER: “...I BELIEVE I HAVE A LOW RISK OF CATCHING THE FLU.”
Response: “As a healthcare worker, we are at an increased risk for catching the flu because of the number of patients with whom we come into contact.”
Fact: When you have the flu, you expose your family, patients and coworkers. Healthy adults may be able to infect others with the flu up to one day prior to the onset of symptoms. Once sick, you can infect others for up to 5 additional days.

BARRIER: “...I’M CONCERNED ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE VACCINE.”
Response: “The most common side effects are soreness, redness or swelling where the shot is given; low grade fever and achiness may be experienced.”
Fact: Most people who get an influenza vaccination have no serious problems with it; however, a vaccine, like any other medication, may cause serious problems such as an allergic reaction.

BARRIER: “...I DON’T THINK THE VACCINE IS VERY EFFECTIVE.”
Response: “The vaccine is very effective. It is the best way to prevent the spread of influenza. The more people who are vaccinated the greater the protection.”
Fact: While it is true that getting a flu shot doesn’t guarantee you won’t get the flu, the vaccine may prevent influenza in 70% - 90% of healthy people younger than 65 years.

BARRIER: “...I’VE NEVER GOTTEN THE FLU BEFORE.”
Response: “Do you really want to? A flu vaccination is the safest, most effective way to prevent influenza.”
Fact: Influenza viruses change from year to year, so even if you were immune to influenza strains circulating in the past, you may not be protected from new strains that may emerge this season.

BARRIER: “...I MIGHT CATCH THE FLU FROM THE VACCINE.”
Response: “That is not possible!”
Fact: Injectable influenza vaccines are made from influenza viruses that have been killed - a dead virus cannot get you sick.

BARRIER: “...I’M AFRAID OF NEEDLES.”
Response: “No one likes getting a shot! But- a few seconds of pain is worth the protection this vaccine can provide from a potentially life-threatening disease.”
Fact: There are additional methods of receiving the influenza vaccine; however, there are trade-offs. The intra-nasal spray is a LIVE virus and has the potential for more severe side effects. Persons receiving this type of vaccine must be healthy, between the ages of 5 – 49 years, not pregnant, not immunocompromised or around people who are immunocompromised.

BARRIER: “...I AM NOT AT RISK FOR GETTING THE FLU BECAUSE I’M HEALTHY AND BECAUSE I WORK IN A HEALTH CARE ENVIRONMENT I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO SO MANY GERMS THAT I’M IMMUNE TO EVERYTHING.”
Response: “All the more reason to get vaccinated; you work in a health care environment.”
Fact: Healthcare workers have an increased risk of exposure to the flu due to the nature of our job. Even though we may not get sick we can still transmit the virus to our patients; who already have health issues.

BARRIER: “...I DON’T HAVE FLU SYMPTOMS SO I CAN’T TRANSMIT IT TO MY PATIENTS OR FAMILIES.”
Response: “Even though you may not have symptoms, you can still spread the virus.”
Fact: The flu is a contagious and potentially deadly infection. Healthcare workers infected with the virus can transmit it to patients; increasing their chances for complications.
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**Barrier:** “...I work in a large healthcare facility and there are many staff members who don’t get vaccinated against the flu. So, one flu vaccine won’t make a difference.”

**Response:** “Demonstrate your leadership and get vaccinated. It is your responsibility to give the best patient-care.”

**Fact:** You can show that quality patient care is important to you by getting the flu shot each year. The CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends annual flu vaccination for healthcare workers. Healthcare workers have been implicated as possible sources of influenza among inpatients.

**Barrier:** “...The flu shot is not safe.”

**Response:** “The flu vaccine is as safe as any other inactivated immunization.”

**Fact:** The flu shot does not cause the flu because it is inactivated.

**Barrier:** “...The flu vaccine does not work.”

**Response:** “It may not be 100% effective but it is still better than not getting vaccinated at all.”

**Fact:** The ability of the flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the recipient. It also depends on the “match” between the strains of influenza virus in the vaccine and those circulating this season.

**Barrier:** “...I can just take antibiotics; they work just as well as the flu vaccine.”

**Response:** “Antibiotics are not a substitute for the vaccine.”

**Fact:** The flu is a viral infection and cannot be treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics are not a substitute for the vaccine; however, antibiotics may be useful in treating complications from the influenza virus.

**Barrier:** “...It’s too late, I’ve missed the window.”

**Response:** “It’s never too late to be a responsible healthcare worker.”

**Fact:** The beginning, severity and length of the flu season can vary widely from year to year. According to CDC data, the peak in flu activity frequently occurs after December, most commonly in February. In general, healthcare providers should be offering the vaccine by October.