

**CDC Diabetes/Flu/Pneumococcal Campaign  
Materials Pretest  
Report on One-on-One Interviews**

**A. Background and Method**

On behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Prospect Associates developed two educational pieces – a printed insert on pneumococcal disease and a patient postcard – to help inform people with diabetes about the importance of receiving vaccinations against flu and pneumonia.

On July 26, 1999, one-on-one interviews were conducted to pre-test the materials in draft format for clarity and effectiveness. A total of 17 interviews were completed with people with Type II diabetes who had never received a pneumonia shot. A diverse group was recruited with respect to gender, age, race (African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian), education, and income. (A copy of the screener questionnaire is attached to this report.) Participant characteristics are summarized below:

Age				Race/Ethnicity			Income		Gender	
22-30	31-40	41-50	51-64	AA	Hisp.	Cauc.	<20K	20-40K	M	F
1	6	5	5	7	3	7	7	10	6	11

The interviews each lasted approximately 20 minutes and were conducted by a professional qualitative researcher. Respondents were given time to read each print piece (insert first, postcard second) before being asked to talk about their overall impressions of the piece, its main message, relevance, believability, strengths, and weaknesses. (A copy of the interview guide is attached to this report.)

**B. Statement of Limitations**

In-depth interviews are most appropriately used to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively precise or absolute measures. Because of the limited number of respondents and other biases inherent in recruiting, this research must be considered within a qualitative frame of reference. Although the findings offer rich, descriptive information about the target audience, they should not be construed as projectable data.

### C. Summary of Key Findings

- The vast majority of respondents responded positively to both the pneumococcal insert and the patient postcard. Respondents were surprised to learn about the risks associated with pneumonia. Many said they already get an annual flu shot, but few knew the importance of having a pneumonia shot as well.
- Respondents were quick to grasp the message of both printed pieces. Most respondents said they found the information to be both believable and personally relevant. Many left the interview saying they planned to talk with their doctor in the near future about getting their flu and pneumonia shots.
- While most respondents found the insert and postcard to be self-explanatory, there were a few minor questions. Some questioned the meaning of the terms “bacteremia” and “pneumococcal.” A couple of respondents wondered why the pneumonia shot needs to be repeated only every 5-10 years, not yearly, like the flu shot. Many asked if the pneumonia shot is brand new and, if not, why was it not recommended before.
- Responding to the visual layout of the pieces, respondents generally liked the large headlines and image of the life preserver. In general, respondents preferred the design of the postcard over the insert because of the postcard’s stronger color and sharper lines. On the insert, respondents preferred the blue-tones on the front side to the browns on the reverse. Women responded more favorably than did men to the images of the swimmer on the reverse side.
- Younger respondents tended to distance themselves from both the flu and pneumonia messages, rationalizing that this advice is more important for older people and people whose diabetes is out of control.

### D. Detailed Findings: Pneumococcal Disease Insert

#### *Initial Reactions:*

- The vast majority of respondents (16 out of 17) responded positively to the insert, describing the copy in terms such as “good,” “informative,” “very clear,” and “self-explanatory.”
- Most respondents were surprised to learn about the risks associated with pneumonia and the importance of having a pneumonia shot – even though they tended to be aware of the risks associated with the flu. Respondents typically said they were glad to learn about an additional step they could take to safeguard their health.

- At least three respondents (female) said they liked the emphasis on prevention.
- Only one respondent (male) responded negatively to the insert on the grounds that the message is “too depressing” with its many references to “dying” and “death.”

*Perceived Message:*

- Respondents were quick to grasp the message, typically summarizing it as follows: Get the pneumonia shot; it’s safe and it can help protect you.
- The insert appeared to be highly motivational. At least 10 out of 17 respondents said they planned to talk with their doctor about having a pneumonia shot; many took the insert copy with them when they left the interview, saying they planned to share the information with friends, family members, or their doctor.

*Personal Relevance:*

- Most respondents (15 out of 17) said they found the insert personally relevant, saying it appears to be written for “someone like me” or “everyone with diabetes.” Many said they read as much as they can about diabetes. In the words of one: “If it’s about diabetes, I read it.”
- The younger respondents, however, tended to distance themselves from the health message, suggesting that the advice is probably more important for older people and people whose diabetes is out of control. Younger individuals typically said they would not need a pneumonia shot because they are young and healthy, their diabetes is in check, and they do not get sick.

*Believability:*

- Approximately 15 out of the 17 respondents described the insert as “very believable.” Many respondents noticed the CDC and HHS logos on the insert. Several individuals said that they particularly trust information that comes from the CDC: “If this is CDC, they’re not going to mess up the figures.”

- A few respondents (5 out of 17) questioned whether the shot could have any additional side effects beyond those mentioned in the insert. These individuals appeared to be seeking assurance that the shot carries no serious risks.
- Two of the male respondents raised scientific questions. One did not understand how the pneumonia vaccine could protect the body if the shot contains no live bacteria. Another questioned the connection between diabetes, flu and pneumonia, saying he did not understand why people with diabetes should be three times more likely to die from these diseases.

*Questions/Areas of Confusion:*

- Respondents identified two unfamiliar words in the text: bacteremia (4 out of 17) and pneumococcal (3 out of 17). It was suggested that the term “pneumonia” precede “pneumococcal” in the text, so that the familiar word appears first.
- The most frequent questions raised were about side effects and interactions. Approximately five respondents asked about possible side effects and interactions, e.g., Can the pneumonia shot give you pneumonia symptoms? Does it interact with other drugs? Does it affect blood sugar levels? One respondent said he assumed that the pneumonia shot would hurt a lot (“more than other shots”).
- Two respondents questioned how it is that the pneumonia shot lasts so long – up to 5 or 10 years, or beyond. If the pneumonia shot is so important, they reasoned, why would you *not* want to take it every year? Going one step further, one respondent concluded that the flu shot must be more important than the pneumonia shot, since the flu shot *is* required annually.
- A couple of respondents asked whether the pneumonia shot must be taken at a certain time of year (like the flu shot), not realizing that this question was answered in the body copy.
- Reactions were mixed among the few respondents (approximately 3 out of 17) who noticed the 60% effectiveness statistic cited in the copy. One respondent commented that 60% seems like a low figure; she wondered how the pneumonia vaccine compares to other vaccines in this regard. However, other respondents indicated that 60% effectiveness was acceptable.
- After reading that the pneumonia shot is appropriate for anyone age two or older, a couple of respondents erroneously concluded that the shot must be one of the standard early childhood immunizations.

- Many respondents asked if the pneumonia shot is already on the market and available. Many were surprised that they had not heard about it and that their doctor had not recommended it.

*Reactions to the Graphic Layout:*

- Virtually all of the respondents said they liked the copy layout, with its large headlines and sub-heads. Respondents said they would be drawn to the headline, “Diabetes and Pneumonia,” because of the reference to diabetes and the large font size. (A number of the respondents indicated that large type is especially important for people with diabetes, since vision impairment is a common outcome of the disease.)
- Reactions to the graphic design were mixed. Respondents said they preferred the blue tones on the front side to the brown tones on the reverse side. However, no one strongly objected to the brown tones. Furthermore, it should be noted that the colors shown on the sample insert probably did not appear exactly as they would on the printed page.
- Both men and women appeared to prefer the life preserver image to the images of the swimmer. The female respondents generally seemed to like the visual images more than their male counterparts – possibly because the swimmers were obviously female. Men seemed to attend more closely to the headlines than the images. When specifically prompted to comment on the visual aspects, male respondents said that they did not especially like the soft, blurry visual images. One male respondent called the layout “visually too busy” and “difficult to see.” In addition, men tended not to grasp an immediate connection between the text and the life-saver theme.

D. Detailed Findings: Patient Postcard

*Initial Reactions:*

- Across the board, respondents reacted very positively to the postcard. Even the few younger respondents who were skeptical about the pneumonia shot appeared to be highly persuaded by the postcard.
- At least 13 out of the 17 respondents said they would “definitely” read the postcard if it came in the mail. Several individuals said they would be pleased to know that a doctor or health educator had targeted them and was “looking out for their health.”

- Respondents also said they liked the postcard for its quick, easy to read format.

*Perceived Message:*

- Even though the postcard mentioned both flu and pneumonia, most respondents interpreted the message as putting more emphasis on the flu shot. Virtually everyone described the postcard message as being simple and direct: Call your doctor to get your annual flu shot; it can save your life.
- Respondents felt that the lifesaver illustration on the front side of the postcard strongly supported the message.
- One respondent praised the postcard for having a much more positive message than the insert (same respondent who criticized the insert for emphasizing death and dying).

*Personal Relevance:*

- At least 13 out of 17 respondents described the postcard as being highly motivational. In particular they found the statistic cited (three times greater risk of death with complications of flu and pneumonia) to be compelling. According to one respondent, "This would definitely motivate me to get the shot." One of the younger respondents said the postcard helped her to see "why the shot is so important."
- Many respondents said they would read the postcard and follow up with a call to their doctor.

*Questions/Areas of Confusion:*

- Respondents found the postcard to be self-explanatory and generally had no questions.
- A couple of respondents suggested that the wording "call your doctor" be amended to read "call your doctor or nearest health clinic" in order to serve the many individuals who do not have private health insurance and/or a personal doctor.
- One respondent said she found it odd that the front of the postcard referred only to the flu shot and not the pneumonia shot as well. She pointed out that someone who regularly takes the flu shot might look at the headline and throw it out, never seeing the pneumonia message on the back.

*Reactions to the Graphic Layout:*

- Virtually everyone expressed strong approval of the front side of the postcard. “Strong” and “eye-catching” were two words used to describe the visual. Respondents found a strong connection between the lifesaver image and the headline, “If you have diabetes, a flu shot could save your life.” They especially liked the large font of the headline and the words “diabetes” and “life” set off in a different color ink.
- Many commented that they liked the sharp lines and stronger colors of the postcard much better than the muted look of the insert. Respondents said they found the postcard to be “more emphatic.”
- A couple of respondents noted that the message copy should be in larger font to make it easier for those who are visually impaired.