Increasing Hepatitis B Vaccine Prevalence Among Refugee Children Arriving in the United States, 2006–2012

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OBJECTIVES: To determine whether the addition of hepatitis B virus (HBV) vaccine to national immunization programs improved vaccination rates among refugee children, a marginalized population with limited access to care.

METHODS: The sample included 2291 refugees younger than 19 years who completed HBV screening after arrival in the United States. Children were categorized by having been born before or after the addition of the 3-dose HBV vaccine to their birth country's national immunization program. The outcome was serological evidence of immunization.

RESULTS: The odds of serological evidence of HBV immunization were higher for children born after the addition of HBV vaccine to their birth country's national immunization program (adjusted odds ratio = 2.54; 95% confidence interval = 2.04, 3.15).

CONCLUSIONS: National HBV vaccination programs have contributed to the increase in HBV vaccination coverage observed among US-bound refugee children.

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS: Ongoing public health surveillance is needed to ensure that vaccine rates are sustained among diverse, conflict-affected, displaced populations.

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Authors: Yun K, Urban K, Mamo B, Matheson J, Payton C, Scott KC, Song L, Stauffer WM, Stone BL, Young J, Lin H

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