Flu shot can help avoid potential devastating impact of dual viruses
By Ora Hirsch Pescovitz

Maybe you think getting a flu vaccine doesn't matter.

Maybe you don't like needles.

Or maybe you're among those who are skeptical about the effectiveness of a flu shot.

Here's some simple advice: Do your homework. Look at the facts. Do your part. Get a shot.

Flu season is coming, and it's of utmost importance that each of us take responsibility to reduce the likelihood of influenza and COVID-19 combining for a double-whammy that could hurt you, your family and would overburden the health care system.

Typically, the contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza viruses is at its height from October to March. On average, each year upward of 30 million Americans contract influenza, more than 450,000 require a hospital stay and more than 30,000 die from influenza.

COVID-19 spreads more readily than the seasonal flu. Even people without symptoms can and do spread the virus. As of September 16, 2020, there have been 126,000 COVID-19 cases in Michigan since the first case was reported on March 10, including nearly 7,000 deaths. The insidious global pandemic has a fatality rate ten times that of the flu.

A flu outbreak occurring at the same time as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic could have a devastating impact on the health of our citizens and our economy. The strain that our hospitals experienced in spring 2020 could be even greater in the fall or winter of 2020-2021.

Many institutions would be without proper resources to effectively care for patients including those with other medical conditions that require hospital stays. We have already experienced the impact of such a crisis on all of our outstanding health care providers and institutions. Imagine what a second similar crisis would bring!

Both the flu and COVID-19 are contagious respiratory illnesses that have similar symptoms. But, you can take specific actions to protect yourself from getting sick from these deadly diseases. You can get a flu shot which is a proven and effective vaccine for influenza. Even though it is not 100% effective in preventing the flu, a flu shot will minimize the symptoms of the flu should you get infected.

You can protect yourself from COVID-19 too. Wear a mask. Maintain social distancing and practice good hygiene.

If each of us does these simple things, we can keep Michigan's citizens and our economy safe and healthy.

Prevention is in your hands.

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