"Serving the needs of our physician members so they can better serve the needs of the community"

Collier County Medical Society Board of Directors Opposes Proposed Changes to Florida School Vaccine Requirements

The Board of Directors of Collier County Medical Society (CCMS) opposes the proposed changes to Florida's school immunization requirements that would remove requirements for vaccination against chickenpox (varicella), hepatitis B, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), and pneumococcal disease for children attending Florida schools.

Vaccination remains one of the safest and most effective tools available to prevent serious infectious disease. Maintaining high vaccination rates not only protects individual children but also helps protect infants, immunocompromised individuals, and others in our community who may be unable to receive certain vaccines or may not develop adequate immunity.

While CCMS respects the important role of parents in making health care decisions for their children, those decisions can also have consequences for other children and the broader community when they involve communicable diseases. Reducing school vaccination requirements risks increasing the incidence and transmission of diseases that have become uncommon largely because of successful vaccination programs.

The diseases prevented by these vaccines can have serious consequences. Hepatitis B can lead to chronic liver disease, cirrhosis, and liver cancer. Varicella can cause serious complications, including pneumonia and neurologic complications, and the skin lesions can become secondarily infected with bacteria, occasionally resulting in severe invasive infections. Hib and pneumococcal disease can cause meningitis, pneumonia, sepsis, permanent disability, and death.

For these reasons, the CCMS Board of Directors supports maintaining evidence-based school vaccination requirements and opposes the proposed removal of these four vaccines from Florida's current requirements.

We encourage parents to discuss vaccinations and any concerns regarding their risks and benefits with their physicians. We also encourage physicians and other members of our community who wish to express their views regarding the proposed rule to submit comments to the Florida Department of Health.

Collier County Medical Society appreciates the continued commitment of our physicians to protecting the health of our patients and our community.

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