

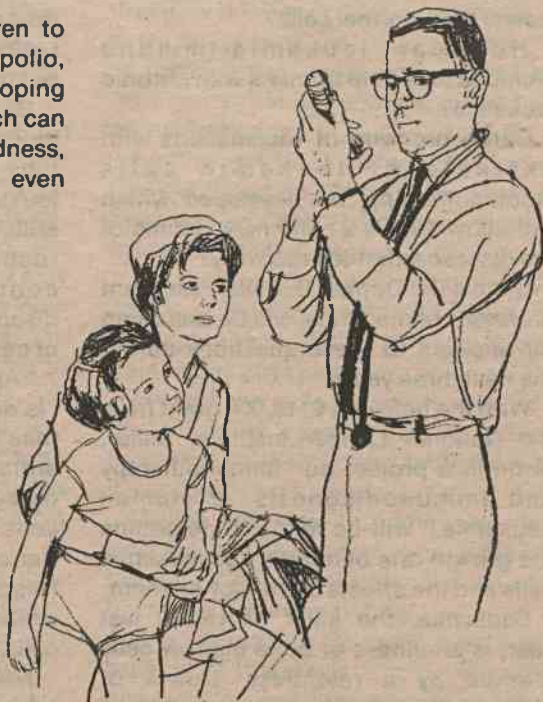
Immunization Levels Dip Alarmingly

Your Children, Have They Been Vaccinated?

By David Williamson

Would you expose your children to such dangerous diseases as polio, measles, rubella, diphtheria, whooping cough or tetanus—afflictions which can cause mental retardation, blindness, deafness, bodily deformities or even death?

Dr. Katz calls early immunizations "the best insurance you can get."



Of course you wouldn't, and the suggestion is as repugnant as it is absurd.

But that's exactly what you're doing if your children haven't been immunized against these diseases, according to one of the nation's leading child specialists.

"Immunization levels among preschool aged children have been decreasing at an alarming rate in the United States during the past few years," said Dr. Samuel L. Katz, chairman of the Department of Pediatrics and head of the Infectious Diseases Committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"It's paradoxical that we've done so well in coming up with vaccines for diseases which most commonly affect children, while at the same time our successes have sowed the seeds for

future failures," he said.

Katz explained that during the 1950's, when polio was killing hundreds of youngsters and crippling thousands more, a great effort was launched to develop vaccines for polio and other childhood diseases. As the vaccines became available, millions of preschoolers were immunized, and epidemics in this country largely became a thing of the past.

But now, he continued, complacency has set in, and immunization levels among children are dropping dramatically. Since the viral agents causing these illnesses are just as prevalent today as they were 20 years ago, the chances for new epidemics are constantly increasing.

"In 1964, for example, almost 90 per cent of the preschool children in the U.S. were vaccinated against poliomyelitis," Katz said. "Now, four of every 10 children in this very vulnerable age group go unprotected."

The pediatrician added that there has been little improvement in the treatment of polio victims in the past 20 years, and the ratio of deaths to cases remains about the same.

And polio is by no means the only potential health hazard which is increasing. According to figures supplied by the U.S. Public Health Service, six of every 10 children five years old or younger have not been immunized against measles. A large majority of measles deaths occur in the first five years of life, and encephalitis with permanent brain damage is a common complication of the disease, Katz said.

The immunization statistics for rubella, or German measles, are also disturbing. Ten years ago, a rubella epidemic in the United States resulted in 30,000 miscarriages and caused serious disabilities in 20,000 babies. Now, five years after a live virus vaccine became available, little more than half of the preschool age children have been vaccinated.

These children, studies have shown, are the primary source of infection for pregnant women.

"Mini-epidemics of measles have been reported in the past year in New Jersey, New York, St. Louis, Montana and several other scattered areas, Katz indicated. Recently, polio has been reported in such geographically distant regions as southern Texas and Greenwich, Conn. Diphtheria outbreaks have occurred in California, Illinois, Washington, Arizona and Louisiana.

The inner-city ghettos are not the only danger areas as many people seem to think, the Duke specialist pointed out. Just as the diseases cross all economic and racial barriers, the complacency which allows children to go unvaccinated extends to everyone regardless of race or circumstance.

Katz, who has recently been involved in a nation-wide effort to publicize and reverse the alarming decline in immunization levels, is urging parents not to wait until the months before their children enter school to have them vaccinated.

"In most cases," he said, "a complete series of immunizations for a child costs less than \$60 if obtained from private physicians. County health departments, such as the one in Durham, offer all necessary shots to preschool children without charge.

"When you consider the time and human suffering involved in these diseases, early immunization of children is the best insurance you can get," the pediatrician concluded.



Intercom

duke university medical center

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 44

NOVEMBER 22, 1974

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

Dinner for 600 ... Anyone?

How would you like to wake up bright and early Thanksgiving Day knowing you had to cook and prepare the traditional feast for a clan of about 600?

You'd never get out of bed?

Maybe, but that's what the medical center dietary department is preparing to do next week for the patients who will be spending Thanksgiving Day at Duke Hospital.

Many of the estimated 600 Thanksgiving dinner guests here will be receiving the traditional fare of the day—turkey and all the trimmin's.

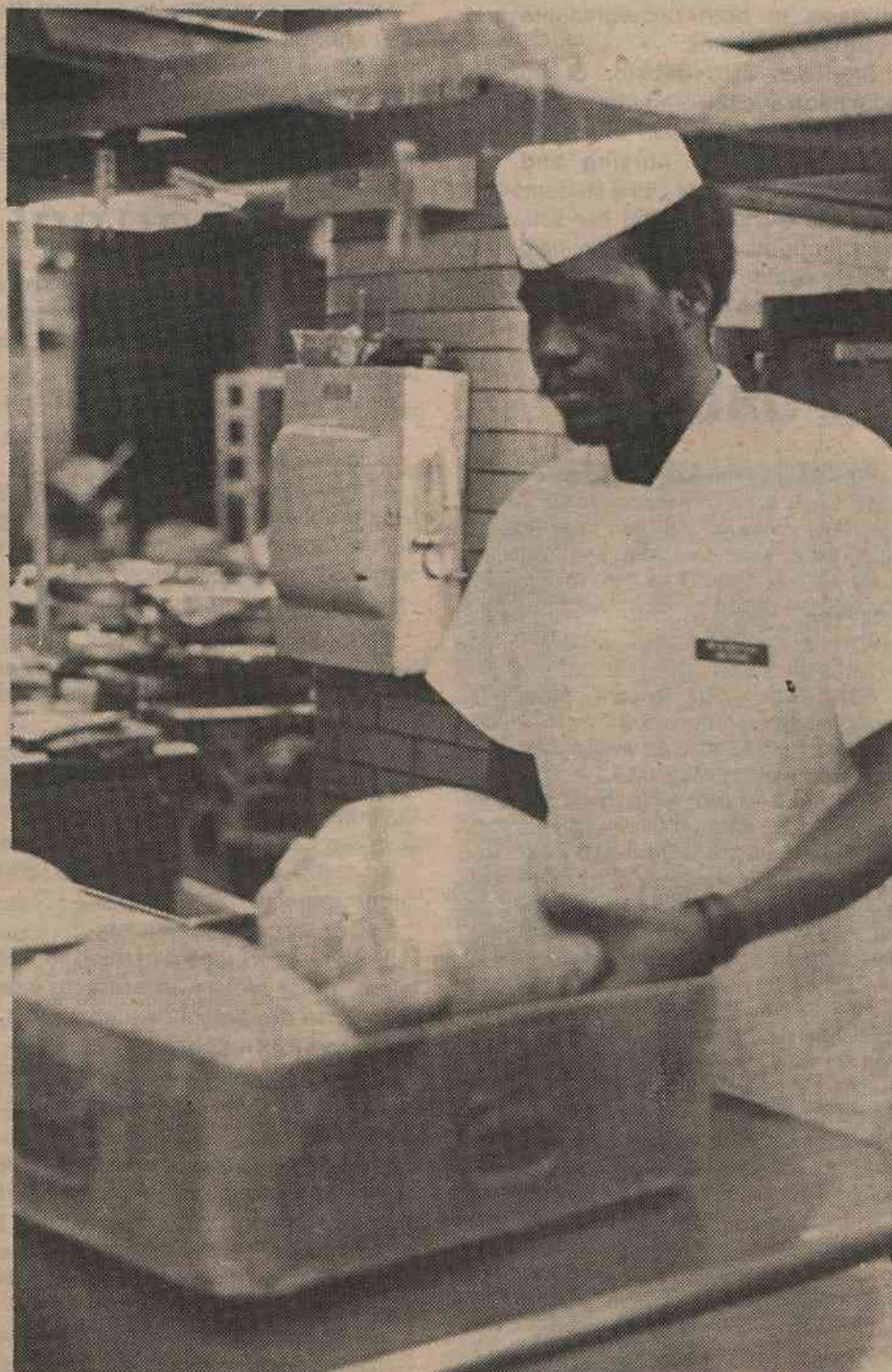
Their trays will come loaded down, straight from the medical center kitchen, decorated with holiday napkins, placemats and tray favors.

After all, that only means *somebody* has to cook 30 20-pound gobblers, make up a 50-quart batch of dressing and 30 quarts of gravy to top it.

Then, of course, there'll be the side dishes of 200 pounds of candied yams, about 60 pounds of French style green beans and nice little servings from 30 cans of cranberry sauce.

If that doesn't whet their appetites, maybe the 60 pumpkin pies that come from the gigantic kitchen's window still might help.

Add to this the special noon buffets the department plans for the pediatric playroom and the psychiatric wards, and you have still another simply nice, traditional Thanksgiving feast.



MOVE 'EM OUT—Night Cook Bobby Mayfield loads up the first of 30 gobblers for Thanksgiving dinner. (Photo by Margaret Howell)