



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

New Fuschillo Law to Expand Access to Vaccines Takes Effect Today

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. October 16, 2012

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Law Allows Pharmacists to Administer the Shingles Vaccine

Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) announced that a new law he authored to give residents greater access to vaccines is now in effect.

The new law adds the shingles vaccine to the list of immunizations that licensed pharmacists are permitted to administer to adults when ordered by a patient's physician or nurse practitioner.

“The shingles vaccine helps residents protect themselves from a painful and dangerous disease, but access to the vaccine has been very limited because many physicians do not carry it. Allowing pharmacists to administer this vaccine will greatly expand access to the vaccine and help many more residents get immunized against shingles,” said Senator Fuschillo.

Under a 2008 law authored by Senator Fuschillo, licensed pharmacists were previously permitted to administer only flu and pneumonia vaccines to adults. Over 7,500 pharmacists have been certified to administer immunizations by the State Education Department since

the law's inception, according to the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York. As of June 30, 2011, pharmacists have vaccinated approximately 663,793 individuals for influenza and pneumococcal disease, according to the New York State Department of Health Bureau of Immunization. The 2008 law successfully improved public health by increasing access to vaccines for many New Yorkers both conveniently and economically.

Allowing pharmacists to administer the shingles vaccine will significantly expand access to the vaccine, which the Centers for Disease Control recommends for individuals ages 60 and over. However, many physicians do not offer the vaccine because of its storage requirements and the fact that it is not a reimbursable physician benefit. As a result, the vaccine is hard for residents to obtain.

Shingles is a viral disease characterized by a painful skin rash with blisters. Along with being severely painful, shingles can be potentially debilitating, causing eye damage and vision loss if it develops on the face. In some cases, shingles can cause nerve damage which results in prolonged periods of pain lasting months or even years. Shingles afflicts more than 70,000 New Yorkers annually, with a significant number suffering with long term effects, according to New York University Langone Medical Center.

Dr. Robert Grossman, CEO, NYU's Langone Medical Center noted in a letter of support that "this high incidence rate can be avoided with increased vaccinations," and "opening the additional avenue for vaccination at the pharmacy will make the vaccine more accessible."