As mentioned in the HAN distributed earlier, the CDC is seeing cases of influenza circulating that do not match the H3N2 component of the flu vaccine this year. About half of the confirmed flu cases in the country this season have displayed “genetic drift” — changes in the genetic code of the virus that decreases vaccine effectiveness.

Influenza Vaccine Talking Points

- H3N2 is not the only component of the flu vaccine: another Flu A (H1N1) and a Flu B strain (Yamagata) make up the trivalent vaccine. Quadrivalent vaccine contains an additional Flu B strain (Victoria). All do a good job protecting against their respective strains.

- Despite the current situation, the vaccine helps patients by:
  - reducing the severity of any symptoms the patients develops,
  - reducing or even preventing the need for hospital admission
  - providing a substantial reduction in the need for intensive care hospitalization
  - decreasing the overall number of deaths caused by influenza.

- If you confirm or suspect influenza in a previously healthy patient*, consider use of antiviral medications oseltamivir and zanamivir. These medications must be provided early and are most effective when given in the first 48 hours of symptom onset.

- The CDC, MDH, and Children’s Hospital stand by the current recommendation that all eligible persons 6 months of age and older be vaccinated against influenza; and children ages 2-8 years, who do not have contraindications, should preferentially receive intranasal vaccine (FluMist).

- Ill people should stay home from work and school if they have symptoms of influenza.

- As always, the best protection is provided by frequent, effective hand hygiene. So encourage staff, patients and families to Wash ‘em Proud!!

*http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm
(Continued on next page)
Influenza is present in Minnesota regionally. We did have vaccine supply issues early this season, and clinics should consider actively reaching out to their patients to ensure they get their vaccines. Remember every visit should be a vaccine visit and opportunity to keep the kids up to date on their immunizations.

Other references:
http://emergency.cdc.gov/HAN/han00374.asp
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6332a3.htm#Influenza_Vaccine_Composition