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Her younger brother, Dain, 20 months, remained rather oblivious to it all, playing with a small stack of wrapped bandages, not realizing that one of them would soon be applied to his thigh at the point where he would receive an injection of the H1N1 vaccine.

Amy, who works as an athletic trainer for Sanford Vermillion, was grateful for Thursday's POD clinic in Vermillion, even though it wasn't a very pleasant experience for her kids.

"I think it's a great opportunity to have a lot of kids immunized that may not get into a clinic, and it's just a nice way to do it," she said. "Since this is free, it makes sure that as many children get immunized as possible."

Vermillion fulfilled its role Thursday as one of 30 POD sites organized by the state to quickly get medications to a larger population in the event of a large infectious disease outbreak or other public health emergency, including bioterrorism and pandemic influenza.

The POD sites receive funding from the South Dakota Department of Health through its federal preparedness grants.

The Vermillion Area POD clinic provided seasonal flu vaccine to infants and children ages 6 months through 18 years. H1N1 vaccine was provided to the following targeted priority groups: contacts to infants who are under 6 months of age, infants and children 6 months of age through 4 years of age, and high risk children 5 years of age through the age of 18. There was no charge for the vaccine.

At one time, it appeared that the H1N1 vaccine may not be administered because of a shortage of supply.

"At the end of last week, we got into some discussions with the state, trying to get some H1N1 available," said Matt Lavin, a local pharmacist and member of the Vermillion School Board, at Monday's board meeting. "They weren't releasing any at the time. We've since been able to acquire about 800 doses."

Initially, the state health department was not going to allow H1N1 vaccine to be administered at the upcoming Vermillion clinic.

"As of Monday morning, they are going to allow us to do it, but it will be strictly limited to children between 6 months and 4 years of age," Lavin said earlier this week. "We are one of three sites that are going to be doing that."

The H1N1 vaccine will be offered through department community health offices, private clinics and other community clinics as it becomes available. Parental consent is required for children younger than 18 so children should be accompanied by their parents.

H1N1 vaccine is now available in limited quantities in the state, with providers working to get it to their highest risk patients including pregnant women, contacts of infant under 6 months, children from 6 months to 4 years, and kids from 5 to 18 with chronic health conditions. Health care workers who have contact with patients or infectious materials are also at high risk and are now being vaccinated.

As more vaccine becomes available it will be offered to



Amy Richardson comforts her 20-month-old son, Dain, as he receives a H1N1 vaccination at Thursday's flu clinic held in the Vermillion High School gymnasium. (Photo by David Lias)

the next groups of individuals at high risk for H1N1 complications – children from 5 to 18 years, adults from 25 to 64 years with chronic health conditions, and young adults from 19 to 24. After those groups are immunized, the vaccine will be available to members of the general population.

Lavin noted that approximately a year of work has been devoted to planning the POD drill. "There's been a lot of time and effort put in making sure that as much preparation ahead of time could be done, and it just happens to be that we have an influenza outbreak at this time. This was something that had been put in the works years ago, and reformulated to fit this model," he said.

Both local and state organizers were hoping to see a strong turnout at Thursday's clinic.

"This will partly test the state's ability to see how many we can (inoculate) in a short amount of time," Lavin told the school board in early October. "If we really needed to get 2,000 people inoculated, how many could we get done in two hours or three hours? We've had a couple flu clinics this year where we've hit 400 kids in a two-hour time frame, so it's doable. This is a great example of a drill that we actually need to do."

Amy was pleased at how well Thursday's event was organized, which eased the experience for parents and their children, despite what seemed to be a crush of people early in the afternoon.

"It didn't take too long," she said. "I expected to wait in line, but it flowed pretty well, I thought."

And, Amy noted, the staff of nurses and volunteers administering the vaccinations and helping with the necessary forms kept their cool in a rather chaotic atmosphere.

"The anxiety is rather high

in the room," she said, referring to the reaction of her kids and other young people who weren't all that appreciative of the necessary shot in the arm they received that day.

While she and her children prepared to leave the gymnasium, she quickly assessed the situation as she gathered Dain's and MaKenzie's coats and comforted her daughter, whose arm was still stinging a bit from her flu shot.

"I think it's nap time," Amy said.

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off again several times."

Vermillion had 1,490 doses of H1N1 available at the start of Thursday's point of distribution event. That means just over 1,000 H1N1 shots were left over at 7 p.m.

Christopherson understands that some people may be frustrated that they couldn't receive the H1N1 vaccine because they didn't fall under the state's strict guidelines – especially in light of the fact that so much of that particular vaccine went unused Thursday.

The mayor hopes that the state department of health may eventually hold another clinic similar to Thursday's in the community and allow a broader category of people to receive the H1N1 vaccine.

"I thought the turnout today was great – especially

the first hour to hour-and-a-half," Christopherson said. "We had people waiting in line outside before the doors even opened. That first group was really serious about wanting to get protection for their children."

The day served to be a learning experience for everyone involved in the process of administering the flu vac-

cines.

"We found out where the bottlenecks were, and we'll look at maybe doing some things differently the next time we have something like this," he said. "It was a really good day; we had great volunteers with a lot of people from the medical community and from the Vermillion community, itself."

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Every year over 36,000 people nationwide die from seasonal flu complications.

This year could be worse.

So, here's how to protect yourself and others:

1.

Get your seasonal flu vaccination.
And ask your doctor if you need the H1N1 vaccine too.

2.

Wash your hands often.
Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, and throw away the tissue.
And don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.

3.

If you do get sick, take antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them, and stay away from other people until you're well.



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