



# Virginia Mason Medical Center- Implementing a Mandatory Influenza Immunization Program

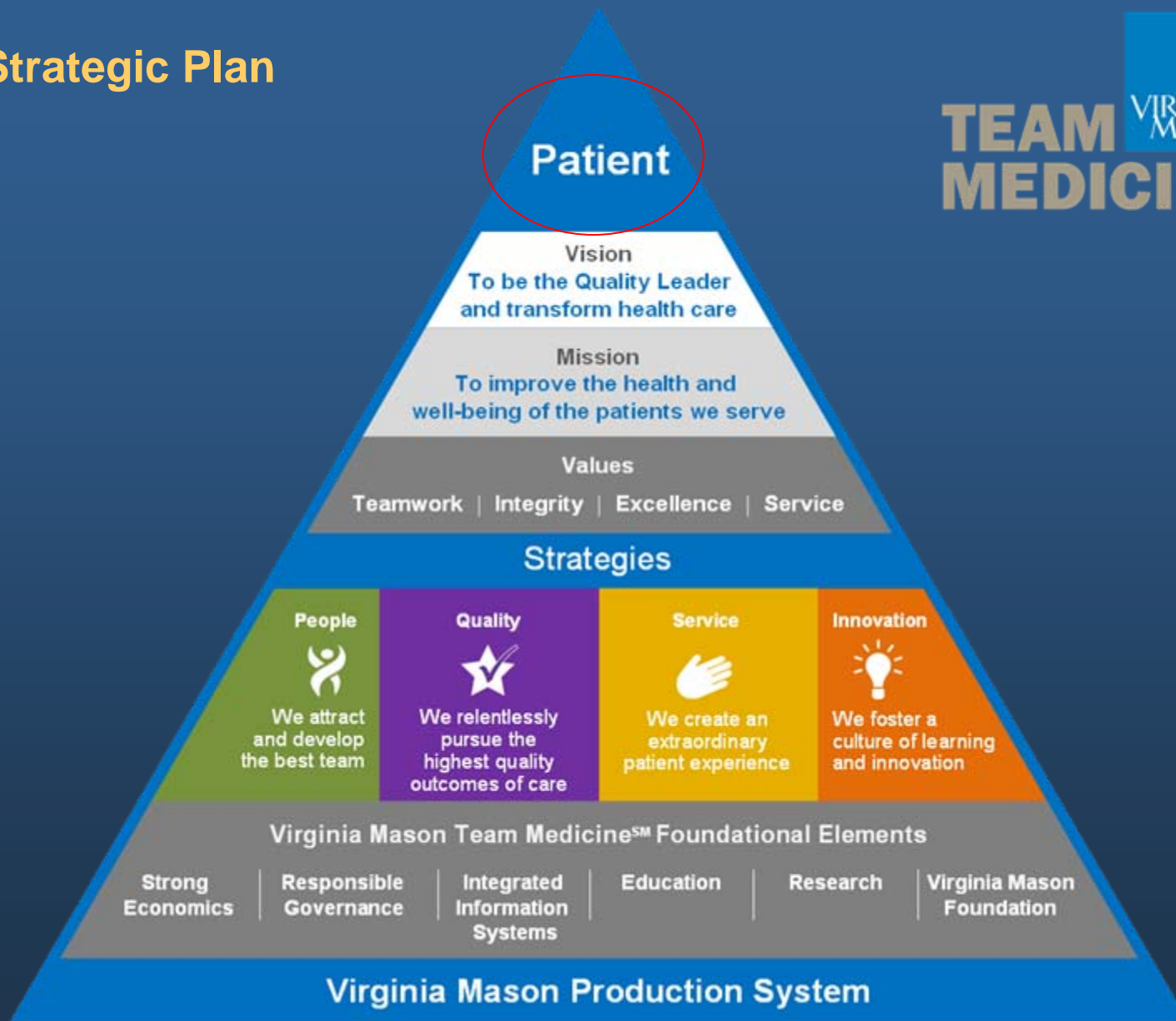
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Virginia Mason Medical Center  
6-11-09  
BCCDC Vancouver, Canada

# Virginia Mason Health System

- Main clinic and hospital in downtown Seattle
- 7 Satellites in western Washington
- Multi-specialty group practice
  - 480 physicians
  - 5000 FTEs
- More than 1 million outpatient visits per year
- 16,000 inpatient admissions per year
- 336-bed tertiary care hospital



# Our Strategic Plan



# Virginia Mason Production System (VMPS)

In 2002 we adopted the Toyota Production System philosophies and practices and began to apply them to healthcare:

- Customer first
- Highest quality
- Obsession with safety
- Highest staff satisfaction
- A successful economic enterprise



# Rapid Process Improvement Workshop (RPIW): A VMPS Tool

- 7-10 staff off line for 5 days (MD, nurse, MA, managers, others)
- Patient on the team when possible
- Take a process and reengineer, using rapid cycles of plan, do, check, act.  
Improved process should be:
  - Patient centered
  - Have waste and waits eliminated



# VMMC Policy: How it came about

- In the summer of 2004 we ran three RPIW workshops looking at ways to improve our delivery of flu shots to patients and to staff.
- After reviewing the literature two things were clear:
  - Immunizing health care workers can result in a safer environment for patients.
  - Voluntary programs to immunize health care workers by and large had not been effective.



# As a Result of the Workshops and Reviewing the Data

- VMMC did not feel that 30-50 percent rate of health care worker immunization was good enough.

## Actions:

Developed Mandatory Influenza Immunization Policy for Staff

- Policy approved by the Management Committee and Board in August 2004!!



# Comprehensive Fitness for Duty Policy

Includes: All employed staff, physicians, community providers, contingent labor, vendors, volunteers and students.

As a result > 1000 additional vaccinations are provided through EH each year. Some of this cost is covered through our community charity care contribution.





# Fitness for Duty

- Staff can request an accommodation on the basis of religious or medical grounds. **No declinations**--only accommodations.
- Written requests for accommodation are evaluated on a case-by-case basis in consultation with Employee Health, Human Resources and the medical director of EH and the VM Infectious Disease Department.
- If approved, staff *must* wear a mask at work during the *entire* influenza season.



# Other Alternatives to Influenza Vaccine?



# 2004 Influenza Season

- Education Campaign started (Greg Poland invited to kick off campaign at grand rounds, ethicist also invited to speak to staff), on-line learning module, and influenza website developed.
- Vaccine shortage put policy on hold for 2004
- Team refocused and worked on Respiratory Etiquette campaign and Influenza Education





Everyone wants to do the right thing:  
Why can't we just make it fun and voluntary?

- CDC recommendation since the early 80's
- Health care worker immunization rates still ***very low (38-42% range) !!***

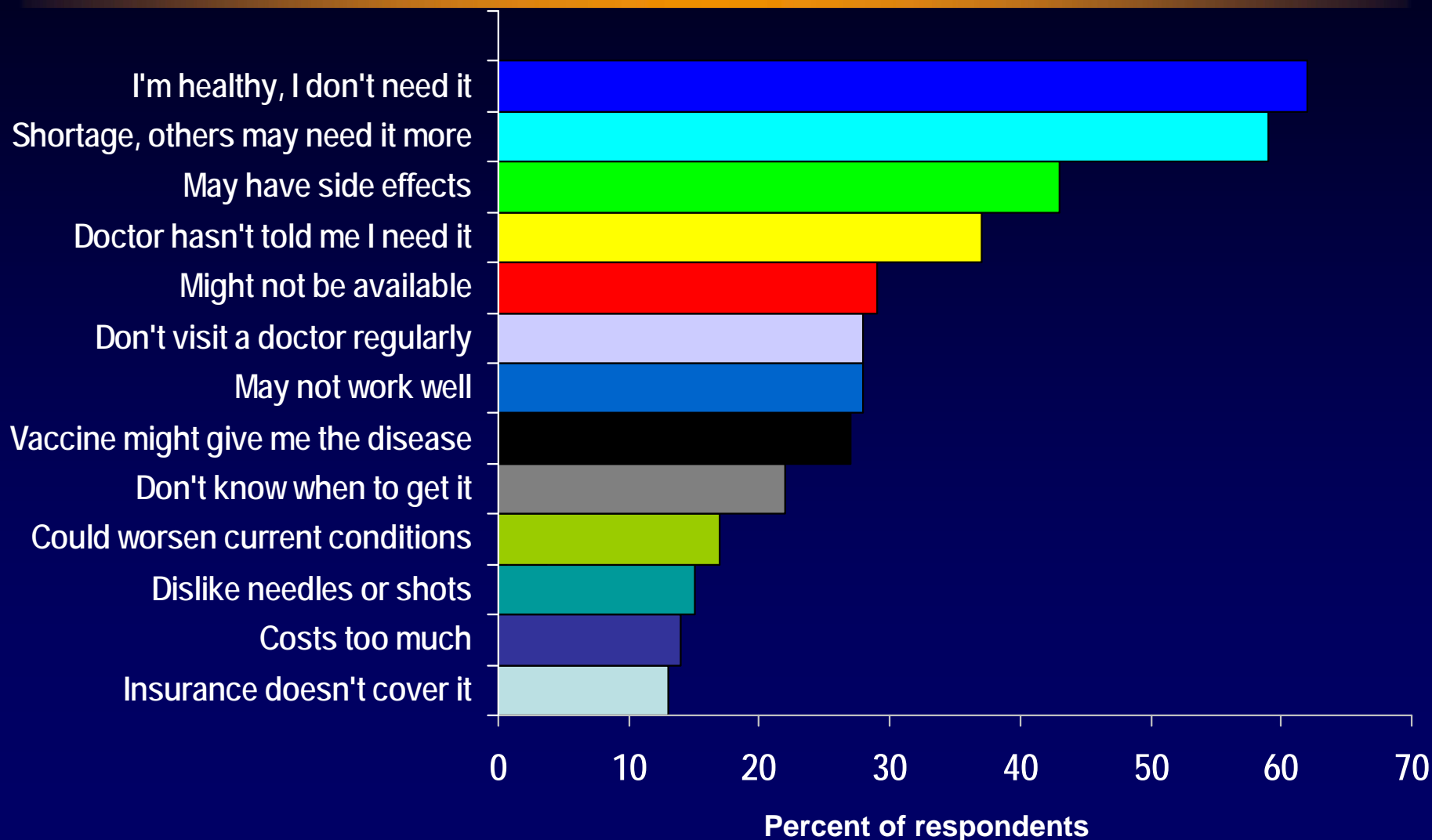


# Reasons given by HCW's for not getting the vaccine

- Not at risk for flu
- Vaccine will cause flu
- Doubt effectiveness of the vaccine
- Afraid of adverse effects
- Don't like injections
- Inconvenience, lack of time, unavailability of vaccine



# Reasons Why Consumers Don't Receive Influenza Vaccination<sup>1</sup>



Reference: 1. Adapted from Johnson DR, et al. *Am J Med.* 2008;121(suppl 2):S28-S35.

# Flu Vaccination – A Moral Responsibility for Nurses?

Nurse ethicists weigh the risks and benefits

Judi Beckman Friedson, RN, MS

**I**n 2004, Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle notified all hospital staff, including 636 nurses, that they must be vaccinated against the flu or face termination. The rationale behind this mandate? Hospital leaders hoped mass flu shot administration would decrease staff absenteeism and reduce flu-related complications and death among patients.

Influenza is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S., killing approximately

Some ethicists like Wendy McHugh, RN, MS, clinical nurse ethicist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, say it's reasonable to assert that clinical nurses have the moral responsibility to receive the flu vaccine as a way to prevent or minimize harm to patients.

But just how do ethics professionals come to this conclusion?

It helps to first understand some of principles on which nurse ethicists evaluate a situation.





“There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.”

- John F. Kennedy



# Unionized Hospital Nurses: The Current Situation

- Immunization Requirement: Grievance Filed and Appealed at the Federal Court of Appeals
  - Arbitrator's decision that mandatory flu vaccination requirement be bargained under collective bargaining agreement, upheld November 2007
- Infection Control Requirement: Unfair Labor Practice Charge filed
  - NLRB Judge ruled that VM can require nurses to wear masks as part of the infection control policy. Judge determines that this is a matter within employer's rights and not a required subject of bargaining



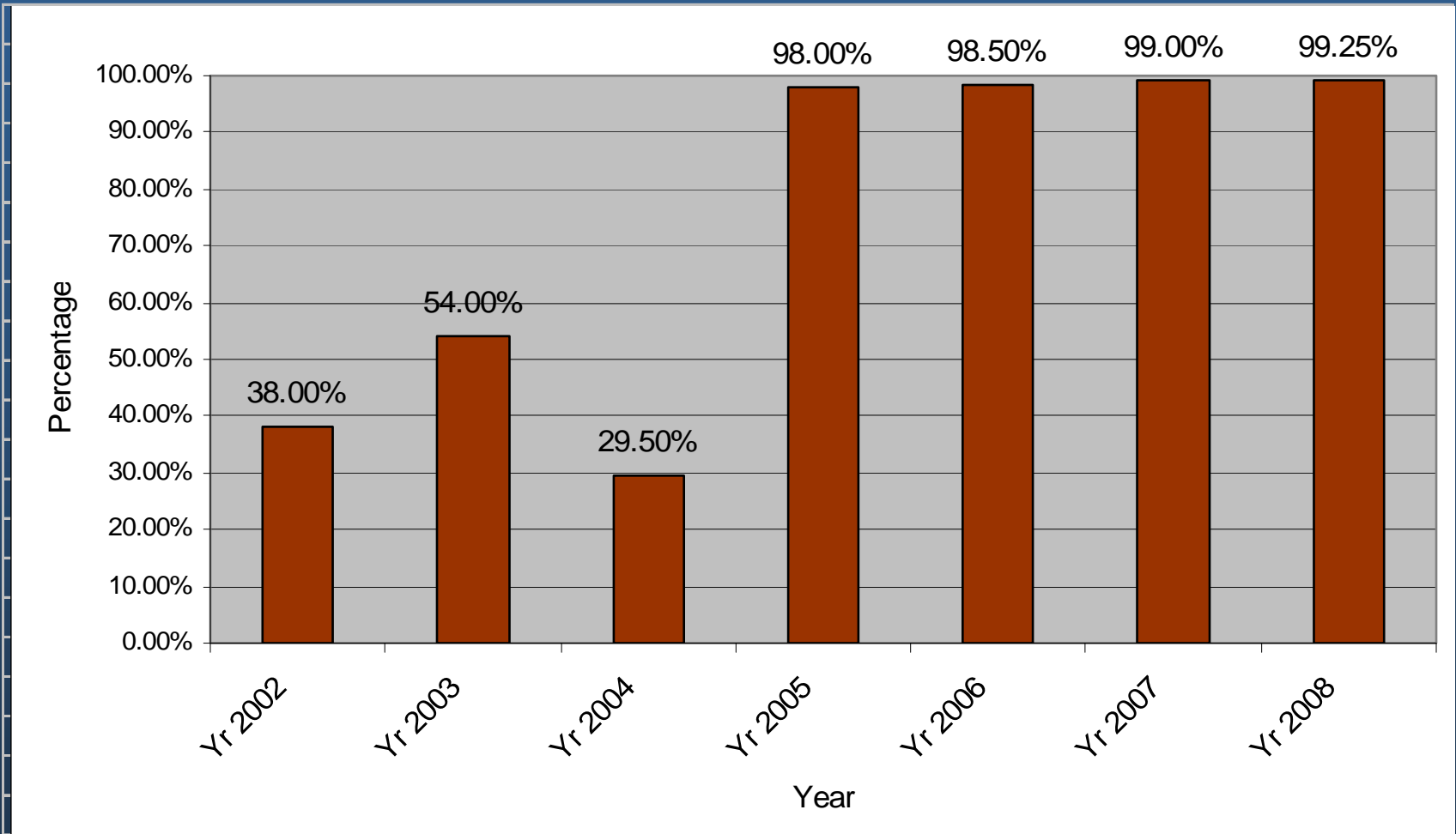
# Accomplishments

For the past 4 years VMMC has achieved a 98% or > vaccination compliance rate, setting the bar across the nation for this important safety measure.

We were the first vertically integrated health care delivery system in the U.S. to accomplish this!!



# Influenza Stats



# Key Components of a Successful Program

- Administrative support (CEO on down, HR, Labor Relations, Legal)
- Education (Debunking the Myths)
- Teamwork
- Flu Champions
- Accommodation Process
- Tracking System
- Fun!! Keep Campaign Focus Positive





# Overcoming Obstacles

## Common Issues/Problems

- Needle Phobia
- Thimerosal Concerns
- Access
  
- Education
  
  
  
  
  
- Allergies
- Accommodations

## Solutions

- Offer LAIV option
- Single dose/ Thimerosal free
- Peer vaccinators, mobile carts, site visits, after hours/WE clinics, drive through clinics, extended hours in EH
- On line learning, flu website, educational promotions with incentives, speakers, published Q & A's, radio/news coverage, community outreach, hotline
- Allergy testing (partner with allergy clinic)
- Develop standard work, written process



# FluMist® Tailgate Party



**Join the fun**  
**Tuesday, Nov. 15**

**11 a.m. to 2 p.m.**  
**Volney Richmond Auditorium**

**10:30 p.m. to midnight**  
**Hospital Correa C**

Join star Seahawks players Isaiah Kacyvenski and J.P. Darche and the Sea Gals as we kick off the influenza vaccine campaign at Virginia Mason. *Seahawks will be present for the daytime party only.*

Lots of food and festivities will be enjoyed by all, and you'll have an opportunity to get FluMist administered to you onsite.

Special thanks to the Seahawks, Johnsonville Sausage and Caffè Apassionato for making this event a success.

Visit V-Net! Headlines for the latest information on the flu immunization program.

# Make it fun!!





# Provide Incentives!!!



# Seahawks Staff



# And mascots...





# Save Lives – Immunize



# Created Community Partnerships

- Pediatric clinic partnered with local school to provide vaccinations
- Participated in “Faces of Influenza” Campaign using VM employee story
- Provide vaccinations to Seahawks employees in exchange for their participation in our kick off
- Vaccinated various corporate partners, including World Trade Center
- Vaccinated residents of a homeless tent city
- Partnered with National Foundation for Infectious Diseases to create a toolkit for immunizing HCW’s



# Faces of Influenza 2008



# Virginia Mason's Flu Team

## Winner of the Outstanding Team Award 2006





# National Award 2007

- Received the Immunization Excellence Award for our Healthcare Worker Campaign at the CDC National Immunization Conference in March of 2007



# Other Measures of Success

- Have developed the infrastructure to deliver mass vaccination
- Better prepared for epidemic/pandemic situations
- Concept imbedded in our culture of safety
- Safer hospital environment
- Provided compassionate and evidence-based accommodations for staff who chose not to receive vaccinations (<1%)



# Protecting Our Patients, Our Families and Our Community



# Save Lives: Immunize

“We’re trying to change the culture, such that this becomes not a possible thing to do, not something to give a consideration, but a routine professional obligation every autumn, and it is in the interest of patient safety.”

William Schaffner, MD  
Professor and Chairman, Preventative Medicine  
Vanderbilt University



# Contact Information

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# References

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# Other References

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- Runy LE. 25 Things you can do to save lives now. *Hospitals and Health Networks* 2005; 79: 40-48.
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