

N.Y. Health Care Workers Revolt Over H1N1 Vaccine

Saying They Should Be Given A Choice, Employees Rally In Albany, Around State, Chant "No Forced Shots!" Protesters Hold Signs That Read: "The State Doesn't Own My Body"

STONY BROOK, N.Y. (CBS) ?

- [H1N1 Vaccine Shots Should Be Readily Available](#)
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They're upset over an ultimatum from the health department.

Workers are being told to either get the swine flu vaccine or lose their jobs.

New York is the first state in the country to mandate flu vaccinations for its health care workers. The first doses of swine flu vaccine will be available beginning next week. Much of it is reserved for state health care workers, but there is growing opposition to required inoculations.

Health care workers in Hauppauge screamed "No forced shots!" as they rallied Tuesday against the state regulation requiring them to roll up their sleeves.

"I don't even tend to the sick. I am in the nutrition field. They are telling me I must get the shot because I work in a health clinic setting," said Paula Small, a Women, Infants and Children health care worker.

Small said she will refuse, worried the vaccine is untested and unproven, leaving her vulnerable. In 1976, there were some deaths associated with a swine flu vaccination.

Registered nurse Frank Mannino, 50, was also angry. He said the state regulation violates his personal freedom and civil rights.

"And now I will lose my job if I don't take the regular flu shot or the swine flu shot."

 [Should Workers Be Forced To Get Vaccinated? Comment On This Story!](#)

When asked if he's willing to lose his job, Mannino said, "Absolutely. I will not take it, will not be forced. This is still America."

The protest also shook Albany Tuesday. Hundreds of demonstrators demanded freedom of choice. After all, as health care professionals they argue they're already constantly washing their hands and aren't likely to transmit or contract the flu.

Around 500,000 health care workers are slated to receive the vaccine.

"It's certainly their prerogative to voice their opinion," said Dr. Susan Donelan of Stony Brook University Hospital.

Donelan said most in the medical community see the benefits and safety of the shots and welcome them, and that hospitals must obey the law.

"Our hospital is committed to following the mandate to have our personnel vaccinated," she said.

The state said change was needed this year to save lives, typically only about 45 percent of health care workers take advantage of voluntary flu vaccines.

More than 150 institutional outbreaks of seasonal and H1N1 flu are expected this year in hospitals, nursing homes and hospice centers.

New York and New Jersey will get their first doses of the swine flu vaccine next week. It will be the nasal mist, not a shot.

