Hello, I am Dr. John Pearl, HCA’s Chief Medical Officer. The flu remains the number one cause of vaccine preventable death in the United States. Sadly, only 63.5% of U.S. healthcare workers received the influenza vaccine in the 2010-2011 flu season. In an earlier study in Scotland, Acute Care Hospital showed that 50% of affected healthcare workers have few or no symptoms of the flu, even when they have evidence in their blood of having had the flu. That means they can transmit the flu to patients or others. We instituted a policy requiring healthcare workers to receive the seasonal influenza vaccine. If they have medical, religious, or philosophical reasons for not getting the flu vaccination, employees must wear a mask or be assigned to non-patient contact roles.

Over the past 2 years, more than 90% of our healthcare workers were vaccinated, while all others wore masks, supporting our goal of 100% patient safety. This year, we want to be the very best in the industry again. Hospitals around the country are recognizing the importance of the flu vaccination. The American Hospital Association recently endorsed a mandatory patient safety policy that requires healthcare workers to be vaccinated against the flu or wear a mask in the presence of patients during flu season. SHEA (Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America) said in a recent statement, “Vaccination of healthcare personnel is a professional and ethical responsibility”. It is a privilege to care for our patients. The key responsibility of meeting their health needs is not to make them sicker. The question today is not “why should we be vaccinated”, but “why isn’t everyone”? 