

NEEDLE TIPS

from the Immunization Action Coalition — www.immunize.org

Thoughts on the final issue of *Needle Tips*

By Deborah L. Wexler, MD, Editor, *Needle Tips*

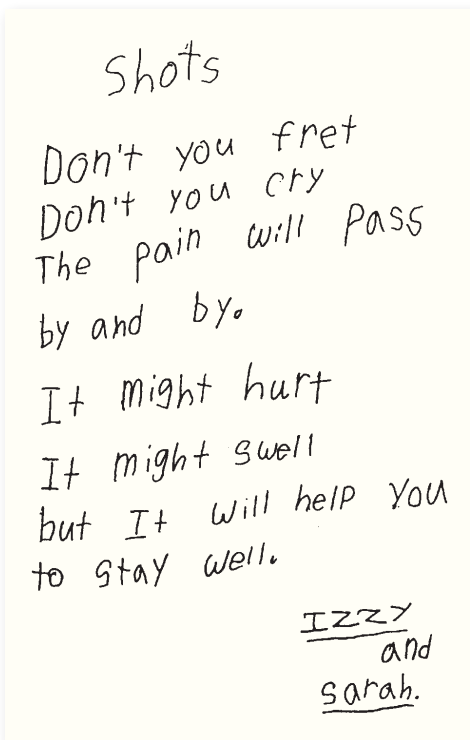
This is your final issue of *Needle Tips*, the Immunization Action Coalition’s (IAC’s) flagship periodical since 1994. I’ve been involved in every aspect of the 62 issues we’ve published, so I’d like to share with you some history of these 23 years – how *Needle Tips* began, how it grew over the years, why we are saying goodbye, and what’s next. I would also like to thank some who have been deeply involved for many years in the work of *Needle Tips*, making it such an inspired, successful, and long-lived publication for readers like you.

How we started...

Needle Tips was preceded by IAC’s main periodical during the early 1990s, the *Hepatitis B Coalition News (HBCN)*. The first issue of *Needle Tips* was published side-by-side with HBCN, stapled together and mailed to nearly 50,000 healthcare professionals and others throughout the United States.

What’s In This Issue

Thoughts on the final issue of <i>Needle Tips</i>	1
Ask the Experts:	
CDC Answers Your Questions	4
Influenza Educational Materials for Patients and Staff	7
Influenza Vaccine Products for the 2017–18 Influenza Season.....	8
Screening Checklist for Contraindications to Influenza Vaccine	9
Standing Orders Templates for Administering Influenza Vaccine	10
How to Administer Influenza Vaccines – IM, ID, IN	11
VISs Are Available in Many Languages	12
New Teen Handout! You’re 16... We recommend these vaccines for you!	13
Now in 7 Languages for Patients!	
IZ Schedule for Children 0–10 Years.....	14
IZ Schedule for Preteens and Teens	15
IZ Schedule for Pregnant Women	16
IZ Schedule for Adults	17
Products You Can Purchase from IAC	18
IAC’s Immunization Resources Order Form.....	19



“Shots” appeared on the cover of the premier issue of *Needle Tips* in 1994, and was written by my children Sarah and Isaac Wexler-Mann.

Following this premier issue, and through 2008, *Needle Tips* was printed and mailed twice a year to pediatricians, family physicians, pediatric nurse practitioners, school nurses, state and local health departments, and many others, with a circulation of up to 200,000.

According to IAC surveys, the most popular feature of *Needle Tips* has been its “Ask the Experts” column, where experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide answers to practical questions about hepatitis B and all other routinely recommended vaccines.

We added a bit of levity to our serious content by sprinkling funny riddles throughout each issue from 1994 until 2009, all of which were illustrated by my artistic children, Sarah, Isaac, and Leo, up until each left for college.

Printing and mailing costs became a problem...

By 2008, the cost of printing and mailing hard copies of publications had become too expensive compared to electronic distribution. As a result, CDC changed its policy and informed us that its

financial support for printing and mailing *Needle Tips* would be discontinued the following year, making it necessary for us to convert to electronic distribution only. The last printed edition of *Needle Tips* was mailed in December 2008. We heard from many disappointed readers.

In 2009, *Needle Tips* went online at www.immunize.org/nt and we began building our email subscriber list. (*Needle Tips* back issues remain available at www.immunize.org/nt/back-issues.asp.) We expanded the number of *Needle Tips* issues to four per year to increase its visibility and impact. *Needle Tips* has always been available free of charge.

Though subscribership rose over the years to nearly 50,000, *Needle Tips* no longer reached the larger audience it had with postal mailings.

Why we are saying goodbye...

Our main website, www.immunize.org, and our weekly email news service, *IAC Express*, are better able to keep *Needle Tips* readers up to date on IAC’s ever-expanding educational content and news. The gap of several months between *Needle Tips* issues has rendered it too untimely to keep up with today’s fast-changing world of immunization.

Going forward...

Although *Needle Tips* will be gone, *IAC Express* will carry on, bringing all *Needle Tips* content to its readers on a weekly basis. News about recently updated ACIP recommendations, new vaccine licensures, Vaccine Information Statements, and CDC publications will be announced, along with articles about IAC’s free, downloadable CDC-reviewed educational materials for patients and clinic staff (e.g., standing orders templates and handouts for patients). At least five times per year, we will publish special editions of *IAC Express* that are exclusively “Ask the Experts” Q&As. If you’re not already an *IAC Express* subscriber, please visit www.immunize.org/subscribe.

Final issue... continued on page 2 ▶

Ask the Experts
Begins on page 4...

Needle Tips

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IAC, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, publishes practical immunization information for healthcare professionals to help increase immunization rates and prevent disease.

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IAC maintains strict editorial independence in its publications.

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Final issue...continued from page 2

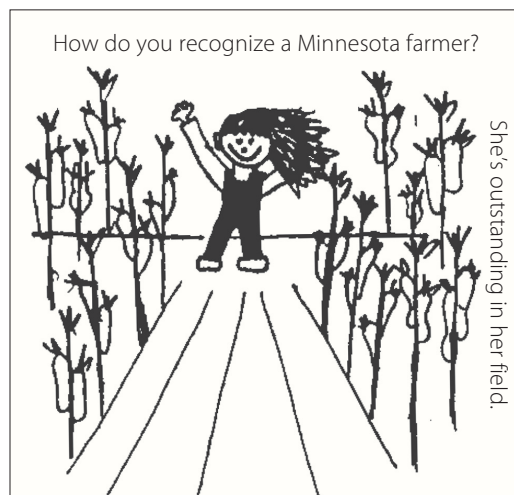
Thank you!

Over these 23 years, I have been honored to work closely with so many wise, talented, and dedicated individuals to bring you every issue of *Needle Tips*. Here are the names of those to whom I am most particularly indebted and about whom I have treasured memories that will never leave me.

CDC's "Ask the Experts" Hall of Fame

Andrew Kroger, MD, MPH, medical officer at CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), has served since 2012 as IAC's key *Needle Tips* contact for providing answers to all "Ask the Experts" questions. To do this, he works with NCIRD's expert education team members who include medical officers **Candice L. Robinson, MD, MPH**, and **Raymond A. Strikas, MD, MPH, FACP, FIDSA**; and nurse educators **Donna L. Weaver, RN, MN**, and **JoEllen Wolicki, BSN, RN**. Thank you all for working with us. It has been an honor for me and IAC to collaborate with CDC's entire education team on *Needle Tips*.

William L. Atkinson, MD, MPH, medical epidemiologist at NCIRD answered hundreds of "Ask the Experts" questions (sometimes from beaches of Mexico) between 1995 and his retirement in 2012. Fortunately for IAC, Bill is now our associate director for immu-



Sarah Wexler-Mann, 1995

nization education and continues to coordinate "Ask the Experts" Q&As with the CDC team of experts.

Harold S. Margolis, MD, past director, CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH), devoted long hours over many years (even while on mountaintop camping trip with his family) to answering hepatitis A and B questions for *Needle Tips* readers until 2004 when he retired from CDC.

Linda A Moyer, RN, retired chief, Education and Training Team, DVH, likewise devoted many hours for many years to answering "Ask the Experts" hepatitis questions until she retired from CDC in 2006. Following retirement, she became a consultant for IAC and continued to answer "Ask the Experts" questions until she retired in 2015.

IAC staff who are no longer with us

Margaret Vaillancourt, writer and community activist, who started IAC with me in 1991, devoted 10 years to *Needle Tips* and IAC, providing lots of laughs and boundless energy. Margaret passed away in 2014.

Becky Payne, assistant to the director (me), served as editor, proofreader, finder of riddles, and devoted 14 years to IAC and to keeping watch over many aspects of *Needle Tips*. We lost our dear Becky to a massive stroke in 2011.

Current IAC staff

Diane Peterson, IAC's associate director for immunization projects, associate editor, and master organizer has been always ready with the preliminary plan for

Final issue...continued on page 3 ▶



Leo Wexler-Mann, 2006

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DISCLAIMER: *Needle Tips* is available to all readers free of charge. Some of the information in this issue is supplied to us by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, and some information is supplied by third-party sources. The Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) has used its best efforts to accurately publish all of this information, but IAC cannot guarantee that the original information as supplied by others is correct or complete, or that it has been accurately published. Some of the information in this issue is created or compiled by IAC. All of the information in this issue is of a time-critical nature, and we cannot guarantee that some of the information is not now outdated, inaccurate, or incomplete. IAC cannot guarantee that reliance on the information in this issue will cause no injury. Before you rely on the information in this issue, you should first independently verify its current accuracy and completeness. IAC is not licensed to practice medicine or pharmacology, and the providing of the information in this issue does not constitute such practice. Any claim against IAC must be submitted to binding arbitration under the auspices of the American Arbitration Association in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

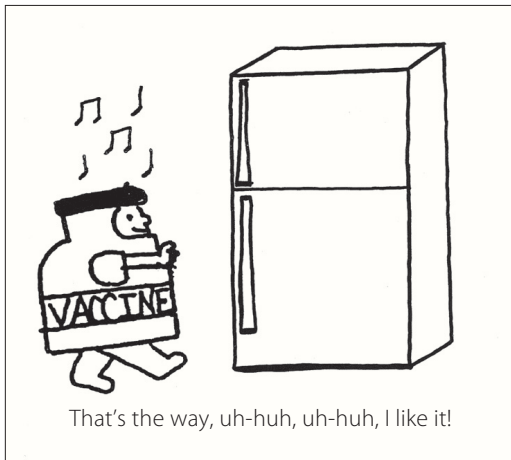
Final issue... continued from page 2

each issue of *Needle Tips* since she started working at IAC in 2002. Her *Needle Tips* assignments are completed early so she can move to everything else she works on. Diane's motto is "Let's git 'er dun."

William L. Atkinson, MD, MPH, in addition to being IAC's associate director for immunization education, in recent years has joined Diane as associate editor of *Needle Tips*. He selects and develops "Ask the Experts" questions within days of our needing them, and sends them to Dr. Kroger at NCIRD. Bill completes his work with astonishing efficiency and accuracy. His home base is in Missouri, but we all hope that someday Bill will move to Minnesota.

Kathryn de Boer, IAC's creative consultant for several years, works wonders at designing the most beautiful pages for displaying *Needle Tips* content. She makes my job easy and working with her is a joy.

Many more IACers work on *Needle Tips*, and all



Sarah Wexler-Mann, 1994

have contributed in important ways. Thank you to **Teresa Anderson, DDS, MPH; Marian Deegan, JD; Mike Franey, PhD; Sheila Franey, MA; Chrystal Mann; Jane Myers, EdM; Julie Murphy, MA; Casey Pauly; L.J. Tan, MS, PhD; Robin VanOss; Pat Vranesich, RN, BSN; and Laurel Wood, MPA.**

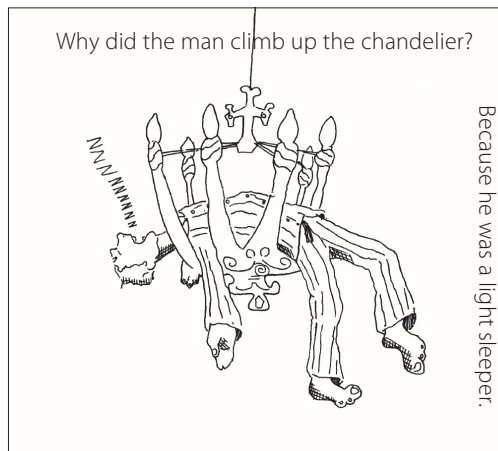
And, of course, my family

Michael Mann, my dear husband of nearly 40 years who thought up the title *Needle Tips*, is so easy-going about my schedule and deadlines, and his presence is such a gift to me and our children.

Sarah Wexler-Mann, our first-born child, was IAC's earliest illustrator featured in *Needle Tips*. Sarah is now an organic hops and flower-growing farmer, communications director, graphic designer, and mom residing outside of Houston, Minnesota.

Isaac Mann, our second-born and second *Needle Tips* illustrator – the one who brought Batman and Robin drawings to *Needle Tips* (and to the Encyclopedia Britannica in 1997) – is now a painter and teacher of master's level art students. He lives in New York City.

Leo Wexler-Mann, our third-born child, was IAC's



Isaac Wexler-Mann, 1999

talented riddle illustrator until 2008. Leo has grown up to become a conservatory-trained pianist, composer, piano teacher, and podcaster, and he continues to draw. He also lives in New York City.

Mark Wexler, my father, who died in 2006, founded Medical Arts Press, a printing company in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I am a printer's daughter. As a child, I spent time learning how to hand set lead type and, to my mother's horror when she found out, how to hand-feed a printing press. Dad taught me about designing printed pages, the importance of white space, font choice, line spacing, and placement of art. When he received his copies of *Needle Tips* in the mail, he would send them right back to me, *covered* with edits and advice so I would get it right in the next issue. Thank you, Dad.

And, finally, our readers

Thank you for reading *Needle Tips*. You, the front lines of immunization in the U.S., have been our most important audience. Your appreciative words over the years have enhanced our passion for our work. Thanks for writing to us. A sampling of your messages can be read online at www.immunize.org/aboutus/what_ntva.asp. We will miss hearing from you about *Needle Tips*, but look forward to receiving your messages about *IAC Express*. Please keep in touch.

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Isaac Wexler-Mann, 1992

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