Prior influenza vaccination significantly reduces deaths in people admitted to hospital with community-acquired pneumonia (CAP).

A US study followed consecutive individuals hospitalised with CAP during the ‘influenza season’ (November to April, 1999-2003). Among the 17,993 adults studied, 1,590 (19% of those with recorded vaccine status) had a history of influenza vaccination in the current or most recent influenza season.

Results showed that people who had been vaccinated were less likely to die in hospital of any cause than those who had not been vaccinated (odds ratio, 0.30; 95% confidence interval, 0.22-0.41). These effects remained significant after adjusting for the co-morbid illnesses and pneumococcal vaccination (adjusted odds ratio for death, 0.61; 95% confidence interval, 0.43-0.87).

ACTION
This observation suggests that ensuring at-risk groups receive an annual influenza vaccination may provide additional benefit in reducing deaths due to community-acquired pneumonia on top of reducing illness associated with influenza.