KATHLEEN ORTEGA, REGISTERED NURSE

Kathleen Ortega, RN from Modesto’s Memorial Hospital was happy to share her staff’s experience using the immunization registry.

Immunization registry use is gaining attention among California hospitals where newborns get their first immunizations. From Kathleen Ortega’s perspective, that is a good thing. “At Memorial, the Hepatitis B vaccine is offered routinely to every patient who delivers a baby.” Memorial’s procedure is for nursery staff to give the shot within the first 12 hours of life. “After the shot, most of the credit for data entry goes to our clerks Kelly Hopkins, Kristian Bern and Pat Torres —our own immunization registry champions,” says Kathleen.

“Our staff members tell me it’s easy,” says Kathleen. “First, the nurses complete a worksheet with the immunization information, then our clerks enter it into the computer within the next few days.” This system allows the hospitals to generate the baby’s first immunization document (the “yellow card”) for the new parents.

Before getting started, Kathleen’s now-confident clerks admitted being hesitant about learning a new system and entering data. “But they tell me it doesn’t take long, it’s really user-friendly and easy to navigate,” she says. Now that they’ve become seasoned users, Kelly adds, “We enter multiple patients’ records fast and easy. It isn’t a bother.”

Hospital staff has even proudly reported printing yellow cards from the registry for their own children who received their first immunization at Memorial.

Kathleen also credits Memorial’s success to the leadership of Dr. Elliott. As a local Neonatologist, he was able to champion the idea of giving infant immunizations at the hospital. This got attention and support from Memorial’s medical directors, physicians, and the hospital board. Kathleen’s last word: “It’s a community benefit to our patients to give a baby his or her first Hepatitis shot and using the immunization registry adds value to this important program.”