

PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS VACCINES IN ITALY

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Background

Vaccines are universally recognised as fundamental tools for guaranteeing public health. However, such programs have come under scrutiny due to misinformation and anti-vaccine campaigns. Low rates of coverage were shown in Italy, therefore, in 2017 the government enforced 10 compulsory vaccines for children with the 2017-2019 National Vaccine Prevention Plan (PNPV). Even if mandatory vaccination is effective, such practice can create suspicion in the population making communication in healthcare settings crucial to build back this trust.

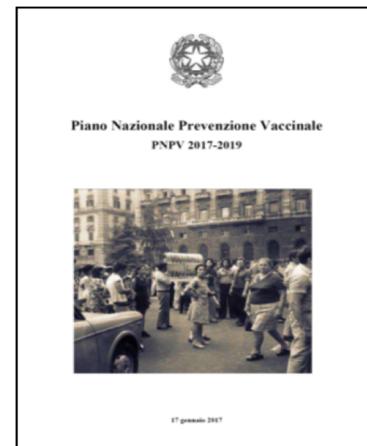


Figure 1. National Vaccine Prevention Plan 2017-2019

Purpose

To determine public knowledge and perception towards vaccinations.

Material & methods

A semi-structured questionnaire (12 closed questions, 1 open-ended question) was distributed to a sample of Italian adult citizens (September 2017-May 2018).

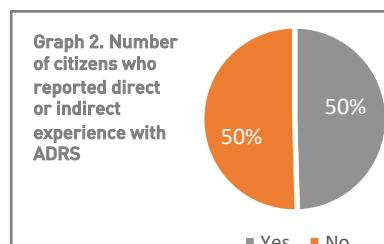
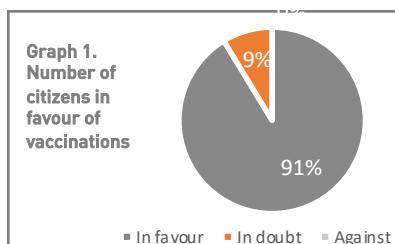
September 2017 –
May 2018

Figure 2. Questionnaire submitted to a sample of citizens

Results

One-hundred and fifteen citizens were included (68% female, mean age 40.7±13.2, 54% had at least 1 child, 53% had a degree).

91% were in favour of vaccinations associating them with a sense of protection from diseases (84%); 9% expressed doubt while no one was against vaccines. 70% reported to know how vaccinations work by information that has been obtained through healthcare workers (61%) and internet (27%). 50% reported direct or indirect experience with adverse reactions (ADRs) even if only one case was serious. 80% reported that they agreed with the PNPV; 87% stated they knew why vaccinations became compulsory; 65% thought vaccinations which are included in the PNPV also protect against diseases that can be brought by immigrants.



Characteristics of the sample	
Total	115
N° female (%)	78/115 (68%)
Mean age (years) ± SD	40.7 ± 13.2
At least 1 child (%)	62/115 (54%)
University degree (%)	61/115 (53%)

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample

80% **agreed** with vaccinations being **compulsory**
65% thought vaccinations included in the PNPV **also protected against diseases that can be brought by immigrants**

91% knew the reason why they received vaccination; 72% had been informed by the clinician about the PNPV. 5% reported that all vaccinations are the same while only 33% knew that anti-HPV vaccination is mandatory also for teenage boys (recent introduction). 33% were concerned about serious ADRs and allergic reactions while 34% reported no fears about vaccination.

Conclusions

The analysis has shown that people are in favour of vaccination, however there are strong concerns about side effects and limited knowledge about the diseases that are prevented through vaccination. Therefore, the results highlight the need for informative campaigns about vaccinations by healthcare workers where hospital pharmacists are in a pivotal position to increase awareness about the importance of vaccinations.