



Barriers to seasonal influenza vaccine uptake among healthcare workers in long-term care facilities

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Executive Summary

We identified the barriers and facilitators to uptake of the seasonal influenza vaccine among healthcare workers in long-term care facilities

Healthcare workers are more likely to get vaccinated if they have received the vaccine in previous years; have clear plans for when, where and how to receive the vaccine; feel vaccination is encouraged by family members and colleagues; and perceive vaccination as a rewarding and worthwhile act.

Why is this issue important?



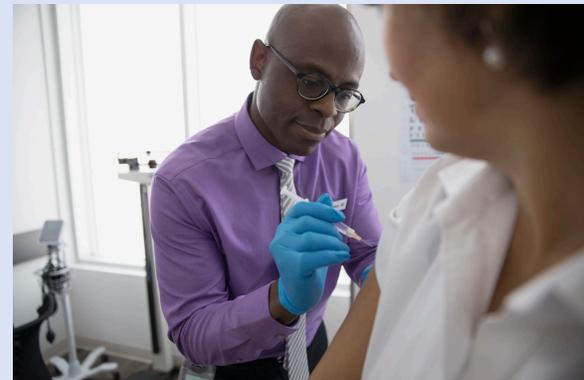
Annual influenza epidemics can lead to 3 to 5 million cases of severe illness and approximately **290,000 to 650,000 respiratory deaths** worldwide

Healthcare workers and the elderly are at an **increased risk** of influenza

While vaccination is recommended for all healthcare workers, uptake is **below 40%** in most European countries

In Ireland, **42.2%** of healthcare workers in **long-term care facilities** received the influenza vaccine during the 2018-2019 influenza season

Psychological theory can help us understand why healthcare workers decide to receive the vaccine or not, however, very **few studies** have explored the barriers to vaccination using a **psychological approach**



What did we do?



- In April-May 2018, **1,096 questionnaires** were delivered to **21 long-term care facilities** in the CHO2 community area (Galway; Roscommon; Mayo)
- Healthcare workers answered questions about themselves, whether they had received the vaccine and their beliefs and attitudes towards the vaccine
- **372 healthcare workers** completed the survey (response rate = 34%)

What did we find?

- **Vaccination uptake** among our participant during the 2018-2019 influenza season was **46.5%** (n=173)
 - Uptake was highest among management and administrative staff (57.1%) and lowest among general support staff (40.7%)
- The main reason given for receiving the vaccine was **to protect the self or others**
- The main reason given for **not** receiving the vaccine was because participants reported **feeling fit and healthy**
- Predictors of vaccination included: having **previously received** the vaccine, having clear **plans and intentions** to vaccinate, perceiving **vaccination as a rewarding and worthwhile act** and feeling **encouraged by close others** to vaccinate
- Flu vaccine campaign awareness:
 - **88.7%** of respondents recalled seeing **national campaigns** promoting vaccination
 - **90.8%** recalled seeing **local campaigns** promoting vaccination
- When asked to choose a possible **reward** for vaccination:
 - **26.3%** of respondents favoured a **donation to charity**, **28%** preferred a **personal reward**, **4.8%** chose a **reward for the facility**
 - **22.0%** believed **no reward** should be offered as an incentive while **15.3%** **did not answer** the question and **3.5%** selected 'other'



Self-reported barriers and facilitators to vaccination

Barriers

- Feeling fit and healthy
- Viewing the vaccine as unnecessary/undesirable
- Previous negative experience post vaccination
- Perceiving the vaccine as ineffective
- Not trusting the contents of the vaccine
- Fearing possible side effects

Facilitators

- Protection of family, friends and colleagues
- Nature of the work setting
- Medical/HSE advice
- Preventing the spread of flu
- Perceiving vaccination as professional responsibility

Recommendations to increase vaccine uptake

1. **ESTABLISH VACCINATION AS ROUTINE** - Vaccination is a habitual behaviour, therefore attempts must be made to establish annual vaccination as a routine behaviour. Encouraging healthcare workers to get vaccinated early in their careers is likely to result in successive vaccination in future years.
2. **VACCINATION ACTION PLANNING** - Annual vaccination campaigns should encourage healthcare workers to complete vaccination action plans which require them to specify where, when and how they will receive the influenza vaccine. This process could help the workers identify and plan for any obstacles to vaccination which may exist.
3. **FOCUS ON POSITIVITY** - Promotional campaigns should explore the benefit of emphasising the positives of receiving the influenza vaccine (e.g. protecting the health of others, making a difference) rather than framing vaccination as a professional responsibility.
4. **SUPPORTIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT** – Each facility should attempt to cultivate an environment where vaccination is supported by management and colleagues.
5. **ADDRESS FEARS** – Healthcare workers' fears and concerns about receiving the vaccine need to be addressed. Their concerns should be listened to and addressed while emphasising the safety and efficacy of the vaccine.

Further information

Kenny E, McNamara Á, Noone C, & Byrne, M. (2019). Barriers to seasonal influenza vaccine uptake among healthcare workers in long-term care facilities: a cross-sectional analysis. *British Journal of Health Psychology* (under review)

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