



# 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 rewarding.

## 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**



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

Influenza vaccine uptake among healthcare workers 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 theories of behaviour change are capable of predicting **85-95%** of healthcare worker vaccine uptake

Very few studies have explored the barriers to vaccination among this population using **psychological theory**

## What did we do?



- In April-May 2018, 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** 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 felt fit **feeling fit and healthy**
- Predictors of vaccination included: having **previously received** the vaccine, having clear **plans and intentions** to vaccinate, perceiving **vaccination as rewarding** 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
- Preferred reward for vaccination:
  - **26.3%** of respondents favoured a **donation to charity**, **16.7%** favoured a **cash voucher**
  - **22%** believed **no reward** should be offered as an incentive while **15.3%** **did not answer** the question



## Reasons for receiving/not receiving the vaccine

### Receiving the vaccine

- Protection of family, friends and colleagues
- Nature of the work setting
- Previous negative experience post vaccination
- Medical/HSE advice
- Prevent the spread of flu
- Perceiving vaccination as professional responsibility

### Not receiving the vaccine

- Feeling fit and healthy
- Viewing the vaccine as unnecessary/undesirable
- Previous negative experience post vaccination
- Perceiving the vaccine as ineffective
- Mistrust of the contents of the vaccine
- Fear of side effects

## Recommendations

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 could 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 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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