

Influenza Vaccination Coverage Rates in Germany during the winter of 2006/2007

T Szucs¹, N Auzanneau², E Lamerain², and The European Vaccine Manufacturers Influenza Working Group³

¹Institute for Social- and Preventive Medicine, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland; ²TNS Healthcare, Montrouge, France; ³European Vaccine Manufacturers, Brussels, Belgium

Objectives: The objectives of the survey were to identify the level of influenza vaccination coverage in Germany in 2006/2007, to understand the drivers and barriers to vaccination, to find out vaccination intentions for next winter and major encouraging factors to vaccination.

Methodology: A telephone omnibus survey was conducted among 2007 non-institutionalised individuals representative of the population aged 14 and over. The research was carried out in December 2006.

Results: In 2006/2007, influenza vaccination coverage rate (VCR) in the surveyed population decreased by 5 points compared to 2005/2006, down to 28% and close to 2004/2005 figures (27%).

In 2006/2007, 45% of the population had never been vaccinated.

In the elderly age-recommended population (people aged 60 and over), VCR was 49% (from 59% in 2005/2006), below 2004/2005 figures (52%).

The principal motivation for being vaccinated was considering flu as a serious illness (mentioned by 90% of the vaccinated people). Following advice from the family doctor/nurse (71%) and avoiding transmission to family/friends (69%) were respectively the second and third main motivations. The main reasons for non-vaccination among people never previously vaccinated were feeling unlikely to catch the flu (48%), thinking about vaccination without getting it (47%), considering flu as a non serious illness (40%) and absence of family doctor's recommendation (39%). Among the people previously vaccinated but dropping out this year, not feeling concerned (39%), forgetfulness (36%), catching flu despite vaccination (32%) and disbelief in vaccine effectiveness (31%) were the major reasons for this behaviour.

For the 2007/2008 winter, 45% of the surveyed population intended to get a flu jab. 68% of the population mentioned that the major encouragement to vaccination was a recommendation from the family doctor.

Conclusion: During winter 2006/2007, VCR was 28% in the population over 14 years of age, undergoing a significant drop compared to last season, suggesting that the high media attention on avian flu in 2005 had had a strong impact on influenza vaccination. Our findings suggest that perception of the seriousness of flu illness is a key decision factor for vaccination and that the family doctor plays a major role in improving vaccine uptake.