

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

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

Methodology: A telephone omnibus survey (using CATI system) was conducted among 2001 non-institutionalised individuals representative of the population aged 14 and over. The research was carried out in December 2006 and January 2007.

Results: In 2006/2007, influenza vaccination coverage rate (VCR) in the population was 24%, the same figure as in 2005/2006.

In the elderly age-recommended population (defined as the people aged 65 and over), VCR increased to 66% (from 64% in 2005/2006), with 6% people being vaccinated for the first time.

In 2006/2007, 67% of the population had never been vaccinated.

The principal motivations for getting vaccinated were advice from the family doctor/nurse (43%), considering flu as a serious illness (24%) and not being in very good health (23%). Not having considered vaccination (38%), feeling unlikely to catch the flu (22%), considering flu as a non serious illness (17%) and absence of family doctor's recommendation (14%) were the main reasons for non-vaccination among the population never previously vaccinated. Among the people previously vaccinated but not this year, lack of interest/motivation (forgetfulness 26%, feeling unconcerned 18%) was the major reason for dropping out, followed by lack of trust in the vaccine (having caught the flu despite vaccination 15% and vaccine not effective enough 14%).

Intentions for getting vaccinated in the 2007/2008 winter dropped (from 30% to 28%) as a possible consequence of a late and weak influenza epidemic this year combined with less media coverage on avian flu.

55% of the surveyed population mentioned recommendation by the family doctor as the major encouragement to vaccination.

Conclusion: During winter 2006/2007 in Italy, VCR was 24% in the population aged 14 and over, stable compared to 2005/2006. The VCR in the age-recommended elderly population increased to 66%. Our findings suggest that the family doctor plays a major encouraging role in improving vaccine uptake.

