Influenza Vaccination Coverage Rates in Finland 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 Finland in 2006/2007, to understand the drivers and barriers to vaccination, to find out vaccination intentions for the next winter and major encouraging factors to vaccination.

Methodology: Telephone ad-hoc interviews (using CATI system) were conducted among 2000 non-institutionalised individuals representative of the population aged 15 years old and over. The fieldwork was carried out in January and February 2007.

Results: For the winter season 2006/2007, influenza vaccination coverage rate (VCR) in the Finnish population was 14% with 2% for first time vaccinations.

68 % of the population had never been vaccinated in 2006/2007.

The highest vaccination rate (51%) was among the elderly age-recommended population (defined as the people aged 65 and over). Moreover, the elderly represent with a level of 57% the strongest intentions to get a flu jab.

The most frequent causes for being vaccinated given by vaccines were: influenza, considered to be a serious illness which people wanted to avoid (71%), not wanting to infect family members or friends (43%) and because of the age (40%). Feeling unlikely to catch the flu (55%), the absence of family doctors' recommendations (48%) and not regarding flu as a serious enough disease (48%) were the main reasons for non-vaccination among the population never previously vaccinated. Those vaccinated in the past but not in the current season said they had not thought about vaccination/ forgot (36%), they did not feel concerned (32%) and they had no trust in the effectiveness of the vaccine (27%).

20% of the inoculated and unvaccinated people intended to get a flu jab next winter (2007/ 2008).

The recommendation from their doctor/ nurse (63%) was considered as the major encouragement to vaccination.

Conclusion: During winter 2006/ 2007, VCR was 14% in the population over 15 years of age, with 51% among the over 65s. Our findings suggest that the perception of the graveness of the flu illness is a key decision factor for getting a vaccination and that the major encouraging element for improving vaccine uptake is the advice from a family doctor.