

# Influenza Vaccination Coverage Rates in Portugal 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 Portugal 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:** A telephone omnibus survey (using CATI system) was conducted among 2000 non-institutionalised individuals representative of the population aged 15 years old and over. The research was carried out in January and February 2007.

**Results:** In 2006/2007, influenza vaccination coverage rate (VCR) in Portugal achieved a level of 24% and 5% for the first time vaccinations. The highest coverage (53%) was reported for the elderly age-recommended population, which is defined as the people aged 65 years and over.

During the winter 2006/2007, 63% of the surveyed population had never been vaccinated. Advice from the family doctor or a nurse (59%), the perception that flu is a serious illness (29%) and older age (28%) were the most frequent motivations for getting inoculated. The main reasons for refusing the flu jab given by individuals never vaccinated before were: lack of recommendation from a healthcare worker (40%), not having considered vaccination before (37%) and feeling implausible to catch the flu (35%). Among the people vaccinated in previous years but not this winter, the absent referral from the family doctor (39%) was the major motive for dropping out this year, followed by forgetfulness (34%) and indifference (22%).

For next winter season (2007/2008), 32% of the Portuguese survey population indicated vaccination intentions.

68% of the population said that the most prominent encouragement to get vaccinated was to follow the health professionals' suggestion.

**Conclusion:** During winter 2006/2007, VCR was 24% in the surveyed population over 15 years of age. The vaccination rate reached 53% in the age-recommended elderly population. Our findings suggest that the active recommendation by healthcare workers could extensively change the number of vaccinated people.