

Influenza Vaccination Coverage Rates in the United Kingdom 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 the UK 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 factor to vaccination.

Methodology: A telephone omnibus survey (using CATI system) was conducted among 2037 non-institutionalised individuals representative of the population aged 16 years old 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 decreased by 1 point in comparison with 2005/2006, to 25% due to a decrease in repeat vaccination (22% vs. 23% in 2005/2006); first time vaccination was stable (3%).

In the elderly age-recommended population (defined as the people aged 65 and over), VCR dropped significantly to 70% (from 79% in 2005/2006), back to 2004/2005 figures (71%).

In 2006/2007, 58% of the population had never been vaccinated.

Advice from family doctor/nurse (60%), considering flu as a serious illness (50%) and older age (42%) were the top 3 UK motivations for being vaccinated. The main reasons for non-vaccination among people never previously vaccinated were absence of family doctor's recommendation (38%), not having considered vaccination (35%), feeling unlikely to catch the flu (33%) and younger age (32%). Among previously vaccinated people dropping out this year, forgetfulness (28%), feeling unconcerned (24%) and absence of recommendation from the family doctor (19%) were the major reasons for not being vaccinated.

For winter 2006/2007, 38% of the surveyed population intended to get a flu jab, which was lower than last season (41%) as a possible consequence of a late and weak influenza epidemic this year combined with less media coverage on avian flu.

72% of the surveyed population mentioned that the major encouragement to vaccination

was a recommendation from their doctor/ nurse.

Conclusion: During winter 2006/2007 in the UK, VCR remained stable in the population aged 16 and over compared to 2005/2006 but dropped significantly in the age-recommended elderly population. Our findings strongly suggest that the family doctor plays a major encouraging role in improving vaccine uptake.