

Editorial

The Need to Develop Health Professionals' Vaccination Competence

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It is widely known that vaccines are one of public health's most cost-effective interventions (W.H.O., 2018a). Immunisation should be recognized as a core component of the human right to health and an individual, community and governmental responsibility (W.H.O., 2013). Furthermore, a review of the literature has identified evidence about the benefits due to immunisation in improved childhood physical development, educational outcomes, and equity in distribution of health gains (Jit et al., 2015). However, in 2017, 19.9 million did not receive routine life-saving vaccinations (W.H.O., 2017). In addition, very recently, UNICEF (2019) reported that over 20 million children worldwide missed out on measles vaccine annually in past 8 years, and therefore, in the first three months of 2019 there have been more than 110.000 measles cases worldwide which is up nearly 300 per cent from the same period last year.

Immunisation is essential for the global health security in today's world where diseases do not respect national borders (Chan et al., 2017). The W.H.O. vision of the Decade of Vaccines 2011–2020 is *a world in which all individuals and communities enjoy lives free from vaccine-preventable diseases* (W.H.O., 2013).

Health professionals are important in communicating information about vaccination and are trusted by the public (Public Health England, 2018). Moreover, health professionals' high level of knowledge and a positive attitude to immunisation have a positive impact in high vaccination (Simone, Carrillo-Santistevé & Lopalco, 2012).

Thus, not only there should be implemented initiatives that will promote vaccines among

all populations groups, but it is also important to ensure competency in vaccinations among health professionals especially among the public health workforce and those who act as vaccinators. One European initiative that has recently been developed to address this issue is the EDUVAC project.

EDUVAC – Educating Vaccination Competence (www.eduvac.eu) is a 3 years Erasmus+ funded project within the framework of Strategic Partnerships programme. EDUVAC is focusing on developing vaccination competences by aiming at enhancing the quality and relevance of the learning programmes in vaccination, and developing and implementing a Web-based course (3 ECTS) and an Intensive Course (2 ECTS) for vaccination. Both courses will be available for any interested stakeholders internationally. The ultimate goal of EDUVAC project is to strengthen the knowledge, skills and attitudes of future health professionals about vaccinations and thus to improve vaccination coverage among different population groups. The EDUVAC consortium consists of five Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) which share the same goals and needs in vaccination education among their students: University of West Attica, Greece (coordinator); Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Finland; Trnava University, Slovakia; University of Vic, Spain and University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Although the Assessment report of Global Vaccine Action Plan (W.H.O., 2018b) identified progress with positive indicators in vaccination coverage and the elimination of preventable diseases, there is still more to be done. More projects and health promoting

interventions should be designed and implemented in order to strengthen immunisation. This year's World Immunisation Week (W.H.O., 2019) aims to champion the power of vaccines to protect our health, and prevent outbreaks and campaigns should involve everyone in order to remain protected together.

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