

SPECIAL PAPER

Why are Healthcare Workers so Resistant to the Acceptance of Influenza Vaccine? a Review of the Literature to Examine Factors that Influence Vaccine Acceptance

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Abstract

Influenza vaccination rates among healthcare workers (HCWs) remain low. The purpose of this paper was to examine the literature for factors that influence the acceptance of influenza vaccine by HCWs, 2) review the literature to examine knowledge that HCWs have of influenza disease and influenza vaccination and 3) and point to gaps in the research that may give guidance towards development of interventions to increase vaccine acceptance. By far the most common barrier noted in the studies was the misperception among HCWs, especially those in the nursing profession, that influenza vaccine causes severe side effects and/or causes influenza disease. In addition, there is lack of knowledge that HCWs can transmit influenza to their patients especially when the HCW come to work ill. There is a lack of understanding by many HCWs, especially nurses, that influenza is a serious and life-threatening disease. Although many HCWs are resistant to take an annual influenza shot, nurses have proven to be the most resistant. If patients are to be provided with the benefits of vaccination against influenza then HCWs and in particular nurses need to be convinced of the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine for their patients and themselves. Therefore it is imperative that we discover why these HCWs have proven to be so resistant to acceptance of influenza vaccine, in order to achieve the 2020 goal of 60% vaccination rate among HCWs.

Key words and phrases: Influenza, influenza vaccine, influenza transmission by healthcare workers, beliefs and attitudes towards influenza vaccine, and barriers to vaccine