

Influenza Vaccine Uptake Among Tunisian Physicians in the 2018-2019 Influenza Season

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Abstract : Healthcare workers' flu vaccination prevents influenza disease among both patients and caregivers. We aimed in this study to assess influenza vaccine (IV) coverage in 2018-2019 among Tunisian physicians and to determine factors associated with IV receipt. A cross sectional study was carried out in Tunisian primary and secondary health care facilities in the 2018-2019 influenza season. Physicians with direct patient contact were recruited according to a self-weighted multistage sampling. Data were collected through a face to face questionnaire containing questions on knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding IV. Bivariate analysis was used in order to determine factors associated with IV receipt. A total of 167 physicians were included in the study with a mean age of 48.2 ± 7.7 years and a sex-ratio (M: F) of 0.37. Among participants, 15.1% (95% CI: [9.7%-20.3%]) were vaccinated against influenza in the 2018-2019 influenza season. Bivariate analysis revealed that previous flu immunization in the four years preceding the 2018-2019 influenza season (OR=32.3; $p < 10^{-3}$), belief that vaccinating healthcare workers may reduce work absenteeism (OR=4.7, $p=0.028$), belief that flu vaccine should be mandatory to healthcare workers (OR=3.3, $p=0.01$) and high confidence towards IV efficacy in preventing influenza among caregivers (OR= 4.5, $p=0.01$) were associated with a higher IV receipt in 2018-2019 among physicians. Less than one fifth of Tunisian physicians were vaccinated against influenza in 2018-2019. Higher vaccine uptake was related to a higher belief in vaccine efficacy in preventing influenza disease among both patients and caregivers. This underscores the need for periodic educational campaigns to raise physicians' awareness about IV efficacy. The switch to an IV mandatory policy should also be considered.

Keywords : influenza vaccine, physicians, Tunisia, vaccination uptake

Conference Title : ICIPC 2020 : International Conference on Infection Prevention and Control

Conference Location : Dublin, Ireland

Conference Dates : November 05-06, 2020