VACCINATION DURING PREGNANCY

WOMEN IN GREECE ARE UNAWARE AND EXPRESS CONCERNS FOR SAFETY

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BACKGROUND

Flu and pertussis vaccines are recommended in pregnancy as an important measure for preventing infection to mothers and newborns. Although there is good evidence on safety of both vaccines, uptake is very low in Greece.

We aimed to describe the **knowledge and attitude** of mothers in Greece on vaccination during pregnancy and **identify barriers and facilitators** that could be used to increase uptake.

METHODS

This was a cross-sectional survey that was conducted with an **anonymous questionnaire of 34 items** on a person-to-person interview with mothers of children presented at the emergency department or hospitalized at a tertiary children's hospital in Athens, Greece. Data collected included demographics, questions on knowledge and perceptions, and vaccination status during the last pregnancy.

RESULTS

154 mothers of a median age of **33 years** (IQR:28-37) responded to the questionnaire and 47.7% had a higher education.

125 (81.2%) have given birth after 1/1/2013 and **14** (11.2%) were vaccinated for flu and **1** (0.08%) for pertussis.

Most frequent reasons given for non-vaccination for flu and pertussis respectively, were

- unawareness** (54.4%, 84.8%)
- Safety** (34.4%, 8.8%)
- their gynecologist advised them not to** (13.6%, 8%)

Even though the majority (92.8%) believes that vaccines are beneficial, **only 36.8%** believe that **flu** vaccination **is safe** during pregnancy and **18.4%** for **pertussis** with **higher rates among mothers who gave birth after 2013**(Table1)

Table 1 – Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions of mothers on Vaccination during pregnancy

On a Scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (totally) how much would you trust to receive information on vaccination during pregnancy	Median (IQR)	If you had to pick one, who would you choose to ask for advice on vaccination during pregnancy(n=115)	N	(%)
Gynecologist	9 (8-10)	Gynecologist	69	60.0%
Pediatrician	9 (8-10)	Pediatrician	35	30.4%
Pharmacist	5 (2-7)	Internet(Country CDC, medical sites)	5	4.4%
Midwife	6 (4-8)	Internet(Social media, fora)	2	1.7%
Internet (National CDC, medical sites,etc)	4 (1-6)	Midwife	4	3.5%
Internet (Social media, fora, etc)	1 (1-3)			
Friends and family	2 (1-5)			

Please tell us your opinion for the following Sentences: (Answers: Totally Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Totally Disagree)	Percentage Answering Agree or Totally Agree		
(Answers: Totally Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Totally Disagree)	<2013	>2013	Total
"Flu is a serious illness during pregnancy"	81.5%	88.8%	87.5%
"Flu Vaccine is Safe during pregnancy"	25.9%	39.2%	36.8%
"Flu Vaccine protects fetus before birth and for the first months of life"	33.3%	40.0%	38.8%
"Pregnant women don't need to be vaccinated for pertussis"	7.4%	24.8%	21.7%
"Pertussis Vaccine is Safe during pregnancy"	14.8%	19.2%	18.4%
"Vaccines in general are beneficial"	88.9%	93.6%	92.8%

"Vaccines in general are beneficial"	88.9%	93.6%	92.8%
"Pertussis Vaccine is safe during pregnancy"	14.8%	19.2%	18.4%
"Pregnant women don't need to be vaccinated for pertussis"	7.4%	24.8%	21.7%

CONCLUSIONS

We detected **very low rates of vaccination for flu or pertussis during pregnancy in Greece** with **high percentages** of mothers **admitting unawareness and expressing concerns on safety**.

The majority would trust their gynecologist for information. Education and incorporating vaccination during routine pregnancy appointments are necessary actions to improve uptake.