



RESEARCH

INFORMATION

TITLE – Barriers and Enablers to Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Uptake in those with Chronic Respiratory Disease



AIMS

Uptake of the seasonal flu vaccination has declined in recent years. Less than half of those with chronic respiratory disease opt to receive the vaccine, with the World Health Organisation setting an uptake target of 75%. The project had two key aims:

- To identify the psychological barriers and facilitators to seasonal influenza (flu) vaccine uptake in adults under the age of 65 with a chronic respiratory disease in Scotland.
- To use this evidence to make recommendations regarding how we can improve vaccine uptake in these individuals as part of the Scottish Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme. This is particularly important in the current context of COVID-19 and the drive for increase flu vaccination rates.



KEY FINDINGS

- Concerns about vaccine side effects, whether perceived risk or experienced by self or others, is the biggest barrier to vaccine uptake.
- There is an overall limited understanding of what the influenza vaccine is and how it works, with participants expressing a wish for more detailed and tailored information relating to their condition.
- The relationship and communication with healthcare providers (HCP) can persuade or deter a person from vaccination.
- Social influences can encourage vaccination, while time and geographical constraints can limit vaccine uptake.
- Socio-demographic factors, including older age, higher education level, and severity of respiratory illness are associated with increased uptake of the influenza vaccine.





WHAT DID THE STUDY INVOLVE?

We carried out surveys and interviews/focus groups with adults under the age of 65 living in Scotland with a chronic respiratory illness. We purposively recruited individuals based on their sociodemographic profile and previous vaccination behaviour over past 5 years (i.e. continuously vaccinated, intermittently vaccinated, never vaccinated).

1. A survey with 429 participants assessing demographic and disease characteristics, past vaccination behaviour, and psychological determinants of vaccine uptake.
2. Focus groups and interviews with 59 participants (this included 38 adults participating across 9 focus groups and 21 individual interviews) to find out participants' views and experiences of the flu vaccine.



WHAT WERE THE RESULTS AND WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

What factors encouraged vaccination?

- Higher age and education level, and more severe respiratory condition
- Sense of feeling protected and valued, and a positive relationship with their HCP
- Reduced sense of vulnerability, fear and anxiety about getting ill
- Acceptance of advice to vaccinate given 'at risk' status
- Better knowledge about the flu and the vaccine, as well as positive attitudes to the vaccine, higher individual control over getting vaccinated and encouragement from friends and family

What factors prevented vaccination?

- Perceived experiences of vaccine side effects either personally or from family and friends
- Uncertainty and anxiety about how the vaccine works and its effectiveness
- Lack of trust or rapport with HCP
- Time constraints, restricted access to vaccine appointments, and geographical limits

Exemplar quotes from qualitative data

"I usually get really fatigued, and it's, I get like flu-like symptoms, in response to the jag. And that will go on for a few weeks. So, the past sort of two or three years, I've not bothered to get it, just to avoid feeling unwell after it"

(female, intermittent)

"I don't know, it just kind of in my head it means that I won't, I possibly won't get the flu. Because when I do get a cold, or the flu, it really takes it out of me because my asthma makes it like ten times worse. So, I think by having it, it makes me feel just a bit safer about just day to day kind of doing things and not being taken

out by the flu or a cold." (male, continuous)

"I don't think I've ever asked, you know, what is it that goes into this, tell me the actual ingredients in a layman's way that I'm going to understand. I feel like if I did ask, I'm not sure how well they'd actually be able to tell me as well. Maybe they would but I think just that sort of one-size-fits-all thing that they kind of throw on you, I think that really needs to be kind of, I guess, adjusted to each

person's needs." (female, non-vaccinating)



WHAT IMPACT COULD THE FINDINGS HAVE?

The findings provide evidence-based and theoretically-informed recommendations for the delivery of the Scottish Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme and for the design of interventions aimed at maximising vaccine uptake:

- Intervention content should encourage recipients to focus on a decisional balance weighing up the pros and cons of vaccination. These informed decisions should be based on having received credible information about health consequences and salience of those consequences to self and others.
- Intervention content must redress misinformation, deliver accurate trustworthy information and provide models of other people's experiences and thinking in order to educate and persuade.
- Intervention content must provide frank detail of the reality of side effects including explanations/expectations of typical immune responses and how these may feel.
- Intervention content should be tailored for specific at risk groups.
- Vaccination should be offered at a range of times and locations, including out of hours or in the workplace, community and mobile vaccination clinics, to reach more people.



HOW WILL THE OUTCOMES BE DISSEMINATED?

- A live knowledge exchange webinar was held with 40 attendees, including stakeholders from Public Health Scotland, The World Health Organisation, Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Partnership, and project participants to share findings and recommendations.
- A digital infographic of the key findings has been developed for sharing with stakeholders and via social media.
- Three journal articles are being prepared for publication.
- Presentations at scientific meetings.



CONCLUSION

- The decision to vaccinate is informed by a complex mix of psychological, social and environmental factors. A range of interventions are needed which educate and persuade people about vaccination and the consequences of their decision, while addressing concerns about side-effects.



RESEARCH TEAM & CONTACT

Lynn Williams, Susan Rasmussen, Nicola Cogan, David Young, Karen Deakin, Allyson Gallant

School of Psychological Sciences & Health,
University of Strathclyde, 40 George Street,
Glasgow, G1 1QE



lynn.williams@strath.ac.uk



0141 548 2489

Additional Information

Study completed: 31st July 2020

Amount of funding received: £190, 806

