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Influenza vaccination: causes of negative attitudes of the population of a rural area of Crete

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Despite efforts made in recent years by the Ministry of Health, the medical associations of the country, the doctors themselves, and the media, to increase influenza vaccination coverage of the population, research data show that the target is not yet reached. The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and behaviors of the population of a rural area of Crete, who are opposed to the appropriate influenza vaccination.

Material and Methods: This study was conducted from October 2014 until February 2015. All patients who presented to the Health Center and the regional clinics and were in need for influenza vaccination according to the national guidelines, but refused it, were registered and questioned about their opinion and attitude towards flu vaccination.

Results: The main reasons stated that they turn down the administration of influenza vaccine are: lack of information (10.1%), erroneous beliefs (21%), 9% stated that it was not recommended by their personal doctor, while a percentage of 20.6% claimed that they forgot it, and 23.2% mentioned that they do not often get sick and have a good health in general and therefore do not need to be vaccinated. Furthermore, 4.1% feared the process of vaccination and last but not least 12% do not consider it to be useful since they have suffered from flu even when vaccinated in previous years.

Conclusions: The results of this study indicate the need for further and more effective interventions to increase vaccination rates. General practitioners, especially in rural and remote areas, should be more pressing and persuasive in matters of vaccination, using all means of education and information for the patients, such as leaflets, speeches, information sessions, in order to make them understand the need for influenza control, and the necessity of the vaccination to prevent the serious complications of the flu in vulnerable population.