

Childhood vaccines yes, but not at a cost

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Researchers from the University of Alicante (Spain) taking part in the European VACSATC project have studied mothers' and fathers' opinions on vaccinating their children in five countries. The results of the survey show that Spanish mothers are more resistant than those in other countries to the idea of paying for vaccines, while 20.9% expressed some concern about the safety of vaccines.

"Mothers in Spain are more concerned about vaccinating their children since the incident with the [human papilloma virus](#) (HPV) vaccine", José Tuells, a researcher at the UA and a Spanish member of the European

VACSATC project, which this study forms part of, tells SINC.

According to the study, which has been published in the journal *Vaccine*, 20.9% of the mothers surveyed in Spain have had some concern about the safety of vaccines, compared with just 8.1% in Switzerland and 4.1% in Norway.

Of the 6,611 surveys carried out in Spain, the United Kingdom, Poland, Norway and Sweden between May 2008 and December 2009, 913 were carried out in the form of face-to-face interviews with Spanish mothers of children aged between 0 and 3.

"We compared the sources that parents use to obtain their information about vaccines, and we asked them to evaluate which they felt to be the most reliable and their opinion about the role that vaccination plays, the safety of vaccines in their countries, and the diseases they consider to be most dangerous", Tuells explains.

Spain happiest with vaccination services

The results also show that Spain is the country where mothers have least concerns when it comes to vaccinating their children (11.9%). The Spanish were also seen to be most pleased with the vaccination services offered (90.8%).

When asked whether they would continue vaccinating their [children](#) in the future, the agreement rate was high in all countries (more than 90%), except in the United Kingdom (80.9%). "This is due to the fact that in Britain people have been immersed in the polemic caused by the MMR vaccine – measles, mumps, rubella – for more than 10 years, and there is some rejection of this vaccine", the Spanish researcher says.

The best information comes from healthcare professionals

There is agreement in all the countries that healthcare professionals are the most trustworthy when it comes to sources of information about vaccines.

"The government and national public health institutes also showed up as important and reliable sources of information in Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom", says Tuells. In Spain and Poland the media, family and friends were given as the second most commonly used and trustworthy information source.

The research group that Tuells leads at the UA is currently carrying out a research line called "[vaccine](#) acceptability" about the beliefs, attitudes and opinions of various social groups in relation to vaccines as a whole and certain specific ones, such as those for HPV, Swine Flu, Pneumococcal Meningitis and Rotavirus.

More information: Pawel Stefanoff, Svenn-Erik Mamelund, Mary Robinson, Eva Netterlid, Jose Tuells, Marianne A. Riise Bergsaker, Harald Heijbel, Joanne Yarwood, "Tracking parental attitudes on vaccination across European countries: The Vaccine Safety, Attitudes, Training and Communication Project (VACSATC)", *VACCINE* 28 (35): 5731-5737, Aug 2010.

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