

50 percent of Australians who oppose vaccination get their information from the Internet

May 23 2013

To coincide with the broadcast of *Jabbed: Love, Fear and Vaccines* (SBS ONE, Sunday 26 May at 8.30pm) the first ever national survey on Australian attitudes to vaccination reveals surprising statistics including half of Australians opposing immunisation get their information from the net. According to the survey those in favour of vaccination consult their GP.

Up until now such surveys had been conducted state by state. This survey reveals a combined snapshot of Australia's opinions to vaccination where although support for immunisation is high, questions and concerns can co-exist.

According to the survey 92% of Australian parents allow their children to be fully vaccinated, whilst 53% express a range of concerns. Younger people appear to be less confident than their parents and grandparents in making their vaccination decisions. Younger people are often relying more heavily on internet research, which is proving to be a powerful tool in the immunisation landscape.

The survey also states that, across the sample, 11% reported that they or someone they knew claim to have experienced a [vaccine](#) reaction. Nevertheless overall support of vaccination is high with Australia having one of the highest rates in the world.

Commenting on the survey findings Professor Mark Kendall [Group Leader](#), Delivery of Drugs and Genes Group (D2G2), Australian Institute for [Bioengineering](#) and [Nanotechnology](#) (AIBN) said "This [national survey](#) of Australian public attitudes to vaccination yields fresh insights into the attitude of public – the parents, the children, the young and the elderly towards vaccines. It drives home an important point: the decisions we make on vaccines, for example whether to get vaccinated or not, hinges upon the [information](#) we gather on vaccines and the source of this information.

It is clear that we the researchers and developers of vaccines need to step up here. We need to work harder in getting the complete information picture of vaccines on the basis of scientific rigour to the public. With the young now sourcing so much information from the internet, we need to package this information based upon science in ways online that are more accessible to them."

Jabbed features interviews with experts including vaccine creators Professor Ian Frazer and Dr Paul Offit, immunology 'super-star' Sir Gustav Nossal, and Dr Peter Fisher, clinical director of the largest alternative health centre in Europe (and the Queen's personal homeopath). Jabbed combines respected insight from the world's leading figures in conventional and alternative medicine, with real life stories of families whose lives have been irrevocably impacted by immunisation. This powerful and confronting documentary is the start of a new conversation about vaccination.

Two and half years in the making, with its world premiere on SBS ONE this Sunday, Jabbed is a game-changing documentary covering one of the most talked about public health topics globally – vaccination. In an attempt to shift the focus from the usual polarised 'pro' and 'anti' vaccine debate, Jabbed digs deeper into the motivations and concerns of ordinary people who are trying to decide how best to protect the ones they love. It

deeply explores concerns around vaccines, concerns shared even by parents who choose to vaccinate.

National Survey of Australian Public Attitudes to Vaccination:

Genepool Productions worked in conjunction with the National Centre for Immunisation & Research Surveillance (NCIRS) in Westmead and Australia Online Research, to develop the first ever national evaluation survey of [public attitudes](#) to vaccination. The survey was completed in April 2012. A nationally representative general population sample was obtained of [Australians](#) aged 18+, with a total sample of n=1,324 respondents which included 452 parents.

Survey findings:

Sources of information and information needs

The Internet is the biggest source of information among the small group who oppose vaccination, while the GP is the main source among supporters:

- 88% of people who support vaccination get information from their GP, compared to 40% of those who oppose vaccination get their information from GP
- 17% of people who support vaccination get their information from the Internet, compared to 50% of those who oppose vaccination get their information from the Internet
- Younger people are significantly more likely to use the Internet as a source of information. They also rely more heavily on family and friends for information. Both of these factors suggest a strong influence of opinions in the community.

- Generally confidence and satisfaction with information provided is high – but lowest among those who oppose vaccinations.
- Key information needs are around side effects, risks and safety testing.

Parent concerns and actions

- 92% of Australian parents allow their children to be fully vaccinated on time.
- 47% of parents have no concerns about vaccine safety.
- 53% of parents have at least some concerns around vaccinating their children.
- 45% allow their children to be vaccinated anyway.
- 8% delay or avoid vaccines. (Of this 8%, 2% fully refuse vaccines for their children).

Reported experience of vaccine reactions:

- Reported experience of vaccine reaction is mostly consistent across age groups.
- About 18% of respondents in the age group of 25-34 report they or someone they know have had a serious reaction to a vaccine.
- Across the whole sample, 11% reported a vaccine reaction.

Provided by Science in Public

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