



## Letter to the Editor

**Influenza vaccination for healthcare workers: Is it really as effective as we claim?**

I read with interest two recent excellent articles which added to the body of literature regarding attitudes towards influenza vaccination among healthcare workers (HCWs) [1,2]. Both surveys drew attention to the appallingly low rate of vaccine uptake in the Netherlands and in Greece, respectively. The same is true in other parts of the world, including UK and USA [3,4]. To overcome the problem, implementation of programs of employee vaccination, and education regarding the benefits of influenza vaccination are two measures that have been widely advocated [5]. Nevertheless, despite the tremendous amount of resource allocated to these programs, despite the fact that HCWs influenza immunisations has been advocated for more than 25 years [6], evidence demonstrating its benefits is not strong and is based only on a few studies with definite limitations [7,8].

A Medline search performed in 2007 using the terms *influenza vaccination* and *healthcare workers* found only seven relevant studies in indexed literature [7]. Of note, although two prospective randomised trials found that vaccinating HCWs in long-term care hospitals resulted in reduction in mortality among patients, these studies were criticised as potentially affected by selection and performance biases [8].

Serious and intellectual doubts have been raised recently regarding studies that showed benefits of influenza vaccination for the elderly [9,10]. Likewise, doubts and controversies concerning the advantages of vaccinating HCWs can be genuine and should be addressed with more convincing evidence. It may not be entirely worthwhile to continue to perform surveys on HCWs and then simply remark that their opinions regarding lack of benefits of vaccination are incorrect and that their attitudes and knowledge are poor.

Before the further implementation of vaccination programs and education programs, and before further studies of HCW attitudes, or factors that may affect these attitudes, more resource and efforts should instead be focused on and allocated for research

over the outcomes and cost–benefit of immunising HCWs against influenza.

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