

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF MEDICAL STUDENTS REGARDING INFLUENZA VACCINATION

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Abstract. Medical students are at risk of contracting influenza and spreading it to others including vulnerable patients. We aimed to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of medical students regarding influenza vaccination, as an effort to promote influenza vaccination among this population. Study subjects were medical students studying in their first to fifth years at International Medical University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Each subject was asked to complete an online questionnaire about their knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding influenza vaccination and some demographic questions. The study was conducted from August until November 2017. A total of 315 students were included in the study; 40.3% were male. The mean [\pm standard deviation (SD)] age of study subjects was 22.0 (\pm 1.8) years. Ninety-one (28.9%) of subjects had previously received influenza vaccination; however, 70(76.9%) had received it > 1 year prior to the study. Those who had previously received influenza vaccination were significantly more likely to be in a preclinical study year ($p < 0.05$) or have a higher influenza knowledge score ($p < 0.05$). The mean influenza vaccine knowledge scores were significantly higher among the vaccinated subjects (11.5 vs 10.3, $p < 0.05$) and the clinical year students (11.1 vs 9.5, $p < 0.001$). Thirty-six point eight percent of non-vaccinated subjects intended to be vaccinated against influenza. Commonly given reasons for not being vaccinated were the perception that they were healthy and did not need it, lack of time, vaccine cost and lack of recommendation by health care providers. In summary, subject influenza vaccine uptake and intention to be vaccinated were low. Improvement of influenza vaccination uptake in the study population can be further increased by educating subjects regarding the risks of contracting influenza, recommendation by the institution and vaccine made easily available.

Keywords: influenza, vaccine, medical students, influenza like illness, knowledge, attitude

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