



會 學 醫 港 香
The Hong Kong Medical Association

FOUNDED IN 1925-INCORPORATED IN 1960 AS A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
MEMBER OF WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND CONFEDERATION OF MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN ASIA & OCEANIA
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PRESS RELEASE

Survey on Hong Kong Citizens' Knowledge and Opinion of Influenza and Influenza Vaccination

The influenza vaccine uptake rate has remained suboptimal at 1/10 level all along. This fell short of the 30% threshold suggested for herd immunity. To gauge Hong Kong citizens' awareness of and opinions on influenza vaccination, and to educate the public that influenza could be fatal, The Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) has commissioned the Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong to conduct the "Survey on Hong Kong Citizens' Knowledge and Opinion of Influenza and Influenza Vaccination" during 6 to 16 November 2012. Totally 1,013 qualified respondents were successfully interviewed via telephone. At the beginning of Year 2013, an influenza infected 3-year old boy had soon developed pneumonia in critical condition.

The HKMA announced the survey results during the press conference held this afternoon. Results showed that the public generally had a serious deficit of knowledge of influenza and influenza vaccination. Only about 1/7 of the respondents had influenza vaccination in the past year, mainly motivated by their perception of poor health condition. Among them, 60% were subsidized by the Government. As only 1/4 vaccinated samples were advised by family members or family doctors, we hope more family doctors can help encouraging their patients to get vaccination. For those people who did not have vaccination, 1/4 of them believed they were in good health condition, showing that they might have overestimated their health condition in fighting against influenza. Besides, only about 3.4% of people knew that there were over 300 cases of intensive care unit or deaths resulted from influenza in Hong Kong from January to July 2012. This indicated that the public had underestimated the seriousness of physical harm of influenza to individuals and the society.

Nearly 60% noticed that December to March is the peak flu season, however, less than 1/10 respondents knew that it took 2 to 4 weeks for influenza vaccination to produce immunity. Although only influenza vaccination is the most effective means of preventing influenza infection, only 68.4% people knew it, and yet there were up to 70-80% who believed wrongly: avoid going to crowded places (85.1%), maintain good indoor ventilation (81.5%), wash hands after sneezing and coughing (75.3%) and wash hands with liquid soap (74.7%). That explains why 85.6% did not get vaccinated. Most of the people did not know the target groups of influenza vaccination, including children 6m to 6 yr, people >50yr of age, people who are immunocompromised, who have respiratory illness, who are obese (type II) with BMI>30 or pregnant, health care workers and pig farmers.

Many respondents wanted the Government to step up its propaganda, though more people considered the Government's promotion was adequate, yet they were not convinced by the Government, and 85.6% did not get vaccinated. So, the promotion



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was unsuccessful. A large no. of respondents believed that take in more Vitamin C (52%) can help protecting them against influenza. Such big misconception should be corrected. Over 80% of people did not know “herd immunity”, the HKMA suggests the Government to put more public education on the topic.

The Hospital Authority has adopted our suggestion by organizing a vaccination team at the Princess Margaret Hospital to go to different wards to vaccinate the health professionals in late December 2012. We hope all other public hospitals will follow soon in order to increase the uptake rate in the health profession. In addition, in order to increase the update rate of the whole health profession to an optimal level, we hope the Government will subsidize health professionals in the private market, who are working in private hospitals and clinics.

The HKMA urges the Government to subsidize all high-risk groups for influenza vaccination. In USA, all are advised to get vaccinated against influenza with reimbursement or insurance coverage. We also recommend all people in the high risk groups, and anyone who wants to prevent influenza infection, to receive influenza vaccination as soon as possible in order to get themselves well-prepared for the flu season.

Notes to editors:

The Hong Kong Medical Association, founded in 1920, aims to bring together Hong Kong's government, institutional, university and private medical practitioners for an effective exchange of views and co-ordination of efforts. The foremost objective of the Association is to safeguard and promote public health. The Association speaks collectively for its members and aims to keep its members abreast of medical ethics, issues and advances around the world. In fulfilling these goals, the association hopes to better serve the people of Hong Kong.

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