



# HProImmune

Promotion of Immunization for Health Professionals in Europe



ISSUE 03

[www.hproimmune.eu](http://www.hproimmune.eu)

## The Project

The Institute of Preventive Medicine Environmental and Occupational Health, Prolepsis, is coordinating a 3-year European project, which started on September 1, 2011. HProImmune is co-funded by the 2nd EU Public Health Program 2008-2013. The project aims to improve the existing knowledge on barriers concerning Health Care Workers (HCWs) immunization and develop educational material for health professionals as regards the immunizations they need to protect themselves, their families and their patients.



The HPROIMMUNE Project has received funding from the European Union / DG Health and Consumer Protection.



Executive  
Agency for  
Health and  
Consumers

## The HProImmune European Information day

A European Information day was held in Athens, on the 08th of July 2014 for the Promotion of Immunization for Health Professionals. The meeting was organized in the framework of the three-year European project **HproImmune** – *Promotion of Immunization for Health Professionals in Europe* ([www.hproimmune.eu](http://www.hproimmune.eu)).

Experts from WHO-Europe, academics, members from medical and nursing organizations and health professionals from 15 countries, as well as the political leadership of the Greek Ministry of Health attended the event. The primary objective of the meeting was the presentation of the educational and informational Toolkit produced by the HproImmune consortium as well as the presentation of work and relevant experience performed in European and international projects or national immunization campaigns.



An internet survey on the attitudes, barriers and enablers for the immunization of HCWs that was conducted during the HproImmune project, was presented at the conference. The online survey received over 5,500 responses from health professionals from 38 countries.

The participants of the EU Information day agreed that we all need to remain alert, as new health threats keep emerging. Despite the fact that policy makers would prefer to avoid making such decisions, mandatory vaccination is a hot issue in public health and it will be strongly debated in the forthcoming years.

It was also stressed that stakeholders should avoid duplication of work; dissemination of the existing tools must be improved, and the sustainability of products should be ensured. Finally, it was suggested to create a network of stakeholders in this area of work, in order to promote common activities and future projects.

Following the EU Information day, the HProImmune partners had on the 09th of July their final meeting. The main aim of the meeting was to discuss the outcomes of the conference and the remaining steps for the finalization of the toolkit material.



## SPEAKERS

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### **Deputy Health Minister, Mr Grigorakos**

Dr Grigorakos, The Deputy Minister of Health, a strong supporter of immunization for health professionals, acknowledged the challenges that arise due to the economic crisis and existing prejudice towards vaccines. However, he also highlighted the crucial role that the HCWs play during infectious disease outbreaks, in which case they are summoned to prevent panic and pose as a role model by their own vaccination.



According to **Prof Linos**, at the University of Athens Medical School and President of the PROLEPSIS Institute, "The immunization of health professionals prior to their involvement in clinical work is also, on some level, a political decision. It is essential to initiate a direct channel of communication between all stakeholders in order to prevent the hazards that both healthcare providers and patients are exposed to on a daily basis. It is crucial that vaccinations be free-of-charge for HCWs and that every assistance possible be provided to health professionals throughout the process".



### **Prof Pavlakis, Research Scientist, NCI**

Prof. Pavlakis stated that the battle to convince HCWs and the public to get vaccinated is continuous and underlined the fact that new health threats emerge in alarming frequency in the last years. He cited that 20% of cancers are due to infectious agents and hence there's a lot for vaccines to contribute in this area as well. Prof. Pavlakis believes that we should focus in the "unsolved solved" problems such as influenza and hepatitis B and that progress and eradication will come only through vaccines. Constant vigilance, continuing work and better application of currently available vaccines are key factors for winning this battle.



**Patricia Blank:** Senior Research Scientist, Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine, Medical Economics, University of Zurich

Dr Blank talked about the importance of HCW immunization as regards public health. She stressed the fact that vaccines are one of the greatest public health achievements, particularly in the industrialized world. Meta-analysis of available literature shows that HCWs are at 3,4 times more risk compared to an average adult. As seasonal influenza has more indirect costs, few studies have been able to estimate the cost for improving influenza vaccination for HCWs, however vaccination and vaccine interventions show good value for money.



**Pernille Jorgensen:** case study in Montenegro

Dr Jorgensen presented the pilot study of a WHO tool (TIP FLU) addressing the step-by-step organization of an immunization programme for HCWs for seasonal influenza grounded in behavioural science and social marketing theories. This piloting study is undertaken in Montenegro, where WHO Europe is collaborating with the Primary Health Centre in Podgorica. WHO Europe collaborated with the HproImmune project for the use of the project survey in Montenegro.



**President of National Organization for Medicines, Dr Lintzeris**

Dr. Lintzeris, the President of NOM (National Organization of Medicines), defended the old saying "Prevention is the best cure". He also stated that regardless of the reasons for non-compliance towards vaccination, the problem must be addressed directly through discussion between the scientific community and the state authorities.



**Dominic McVey:** Director, Word of Mouth Research Ltd

Mr McVey presented work performed under the FP7 project: Effective communication in outbreak management: development of an evidence-based tool for Europe (ECOM). This project is working since 2012 to develop tools to assist those responsible for developing strategies and plans for communication. A review of available literature on the uptake of influenza vaccination by HCWs, which was performed under the ECOM project, has concluded that health professionals need more education on the effectiveness of the vaccines and the vaccine-related risks. In addition vaccination recommendations should be combined with incentives, improved access to vaccines and the use of role models.



## ONLINE SURVEY

The online HproImmune survey received 5553 responses from 38 countries. Even though the conclusions indicate that the overwhelming majority of health professionals show a substantial support for vaccination (86.7%) there is a lot left to be done.

Health professionals recognize the risk of exposure to vaccine-preventable diseases during their work, resulting in subsequent exposure of their families and their vulnerable patients. **Nevertheless, significant numbers of health professionals are not up-to-date for their vaccines.** The majority of health professionals report that they have been vaccinated against Hepatitis B, but particularly low percentages are reported for other diseases (<20% have been vaccinated for chickenpox, measles, rubella and mumps). A relatively low percentage is also recorded for seasonal flu vaccination among health professionals.



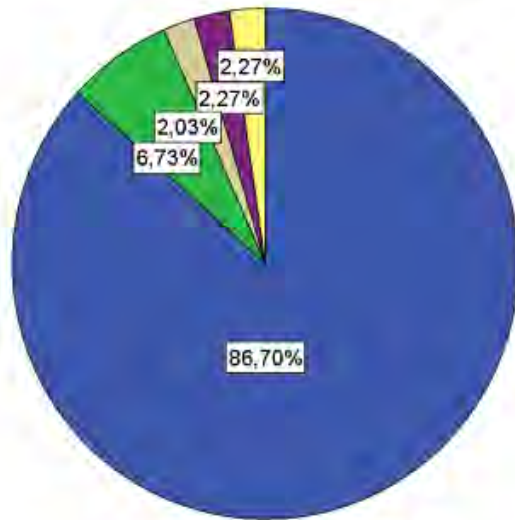
The survey points out that nurses are seven times more likely to mistrust vaccines compared to medical doctors, which highlights this particular group as a target for communication campaigns. A very interesting finding of the survey is that a significant majority (about 66%) of health professionals who participated in the survey – especially physicians – believe that certain vaccines should be mandatory for health professionals with clinical work.

### Specifically,

- The majority of health care workers believe vaccines are important for reducing or eliminating serious diseases (86.7%)
- Physicians believe in higher percentages in vaccines (96.1% versus 82.0% for nurses and 83.3% for allied health professionals)
- More than half of HCWs (51.9%) did not need to prove immunity against vaccine preventable diseases before starting to work.
- The majority of HCWs did not receive vaccination against MMR, varicella or pandemic flu during the last 10 years. The percentages for tetanus and seasonal flu were 52-56%, and for Hepatitis B 63%.
- The majority of medical doctors (76.8%) believe that vaccination should be mandatory, whereas, the corresponding percentages are lower for nurses and other allied categories (60.9% and 63.2%).



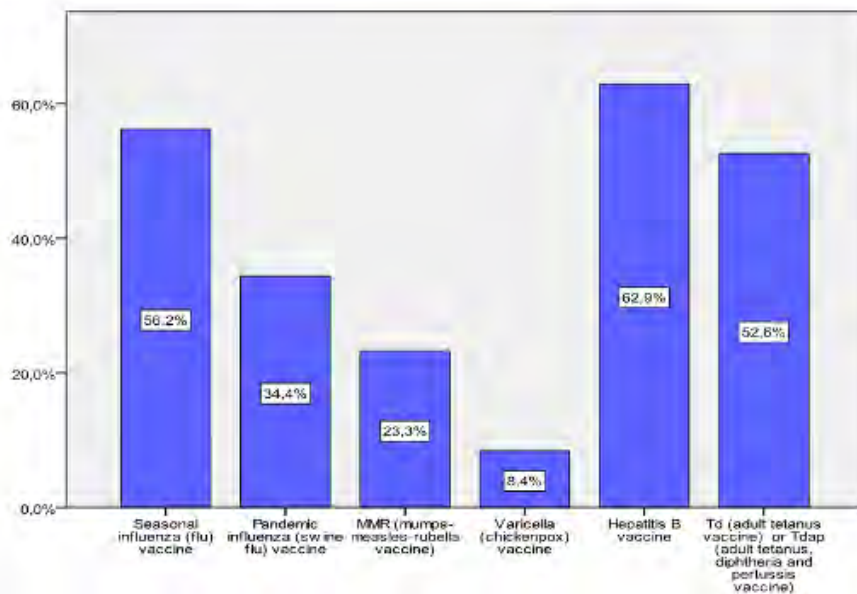
## Which of the following statements do you feel that best reflects your personal view about vaccines-I



Cases weighted by weights

- I believe vaccines are important for reducing or eliminating serious diseases
- I believe that vaccines are useful in particular settings for example in the developing world
- Not sure
- I believe in challenging natural immunity by contracting the disease rather than getting vaccinated
- I don't believe in vaccinations, I believe that they do more harm than good

## Percentage of HCWs who have received vaccination against VPDs in the last 10 years (by disease)



## The educational and informational toolkit

The general objective of **HproImmune** project is to promote vaccination coverage of health care workers in different health care settings by developing a tailored communication tool. HProImmune consortium reviewed and summarized existing information and best practices and explored behaviors and barriers regarding HCW immunization. This knowledge has been compiled in a comprehensive communication toolkit addressing the needs and perspectives of medical personnel in primary care as well as hospital setting.

This educational and informational toolkit was presented within the EU Information day. The toolkit includes a data base with the recommended vaccinations in European countries, newsletters about vaccines and presentations and communication tools, such as posters. The educational toolkit can be found on HproImmune's website and will very soon be available in all consortium languages.



## Partnership

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### ● Main Partner:

- Institute of Preventive Medicine, Environmental and Occupational Health, Prolepsis, Greece

### ● Associated Partners:

- National Institute of Infectious Diseases Prof Dr Matei Bals - Romania
- Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine - Poland
- Mokymų Tyrimų ir Vystymo Centras Lithuania
- Istituto Superiore Di Sanità - Italy
- Fundatia Romtens - Romania
- Cyprus University of Technology Cyprus
- Technische Universität Dresden Germany
- National Hellenic Nurses Association - Greece
- Hellenic Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Greece



## Contact Details

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