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Improving vaccination uptake among patients with chronic conditions across Europe

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What happens next

Background

- Throughout Europe, vaccine uptake remains low among individuals with underlying health conditions
- Understanding why uptake is so low is crucial to improve longevity and protect people's health
- COVID-19 has acted as a reminder about the importance of immunisation and protecting clinically vulnerable people

Aims

- To understand the common barriers to vaccination uptake across Europe
- To identify policy solutions and ideas to improve uptake across clinical risk groups
- To work with policymakers and stakeholders to find ways to deliver these changes

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European vaccine guidance, policy and uptake

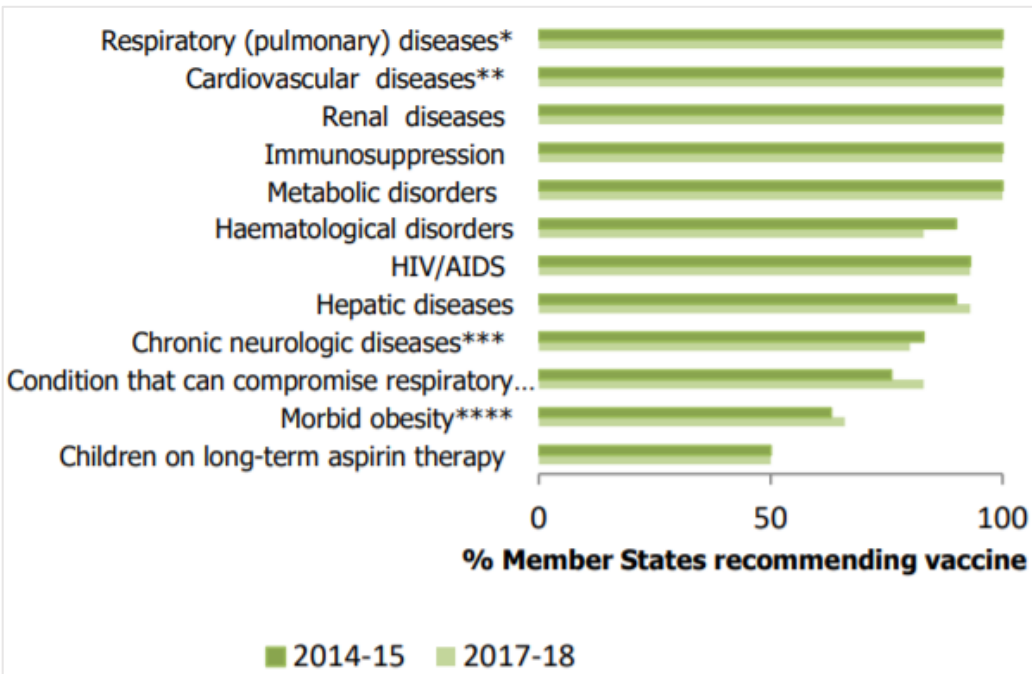
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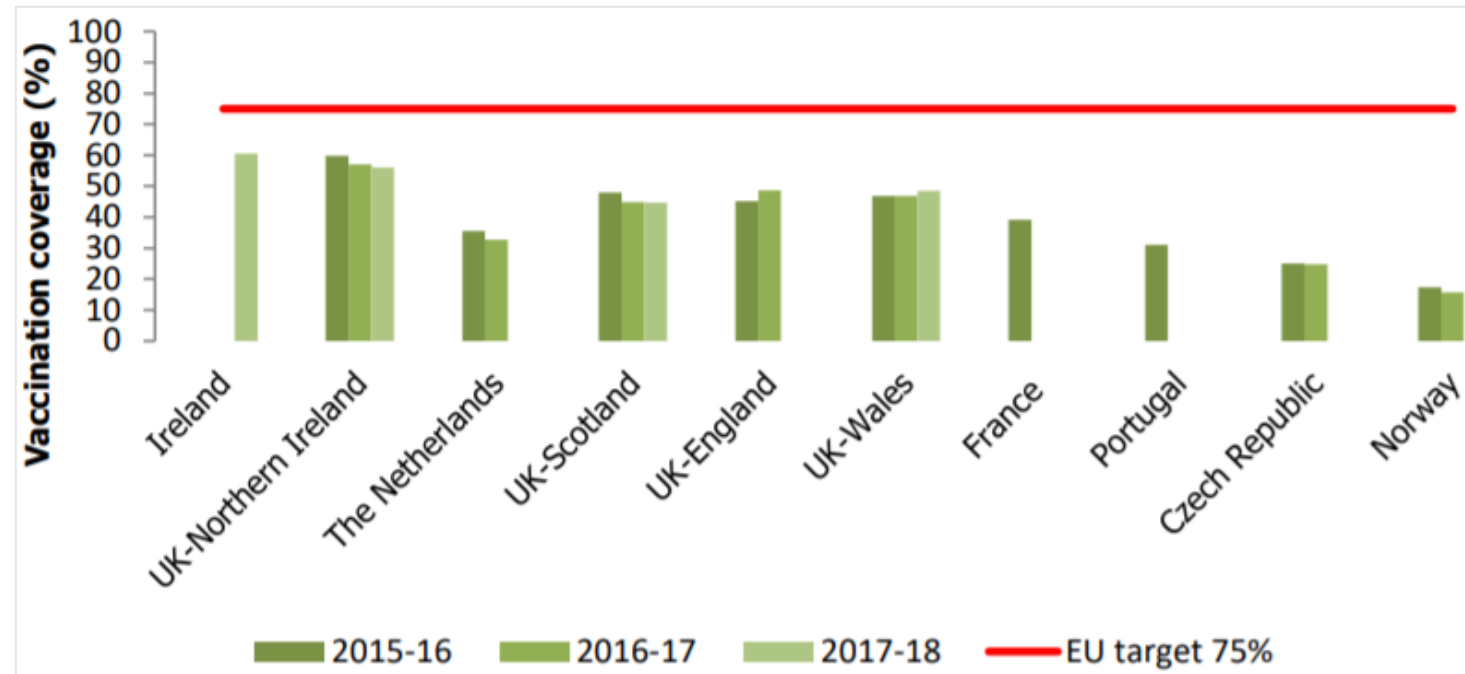
Eligible risk groups and vaccine uptake

- Flu vax is recommended for people with pulmonary, renal, hepatic, neurologic, and immunosuppressive diseases
- Recommendations differ by country for CVD, diabetes, morbid obesity, and long-term aspirin use
- Among the 44 European countries with recommendations, only 14 provided information on coverage¹
- Flu vaccine uptake is ~45%² – far below the 75% target set by WHO-Europe (which no EU member state has reached)

Vaccine recommendation and uptake



Proportion of EU/EEA Member States recommending seasonal influenza vaccine by chronic medical condition, 2014–15 and 2017–18 influenza seasons³



Seasonal influenza vaccination coverage rates among individuals with chronic medical conditions, seven EU/EEA Member States, influenza seasons: 2015–2016, 2016–2017 and, if available, 2017–2018⁴

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Current barriers to vaccine uptake across Europe

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What are the barriers to uptake?

- In Europe, costs, misinformation and efficacy concerns create challenges⁵
- Perceptions that vaccines cause illness and side-effects may also create lower uptake⁶
- Inconvenience and complacency have been identified as barriers to flu vaccine uptake⁷
- Stigma and discrimination prevent some groups from accessing healthcare i.e. people living with HIV⁸

Other factors limiting uptake

Questions asked to those who have never been vaccinated: “Why do you not get vaccinated against influenza?”

	All	Medical staff	Chronic illness	Over 65 years
I don't think I am very likely to catch influenza	40.4 ^a	38.6 ^a	41.1 ^a	38.6 ^a
I have never considered it before	33.3 ^a	24.7	25.7	25.3 ^a
My family doctor has never recommended it to me	27.3 ^a	30.7 ^a	27.6 ^a	19.3
I am too young to be vaccinated	23.0	26.9 ^a	12.8	1.8
It is not a serious enough illness	20.0	22.4	19.3	15.1
I thought about it but I didn't end up having the vaccination	14.4	19.9	27.7 ^a	20.4 ^a

The most frequently stated reasons (%)

^a Main three reasons stated amongst the different groups.

A study⁹ across five European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK) found that people in clinical risk groups were least likely to get the flu vaccine because catching the disease was unlikely (41%), they did not get around to having it (27%) and because they hadn't been recommended it by a medical professional (27%). Almost 1 in 5 people also suggested it wasn't serious enough.

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Opportunities to increase vaccine uptake in Europe

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Ways to increase uptake

- Improving access: local services e.g. mobile health clinics
- Widening vaccine locations: e.g. using pharmacies
- Reducing costs: removing co-payments and charges
- Better communication: targeted messaging and nudges
- Harnessing technology: vaccine tracker apps

Discussion

- What do you think is the most common barrier to vaccine uptake across clinical risk groups in Europe?
- How could policy be improved to ensure better uptake?
- What can be learned from COVID-19 and future vaccine roll-outs for other preventable diseases?
- What else can be done to ensure better vaccine uptake?
 - What do policymakers need to do?
 - How can the private sector help?
 - What role can third sector organisations and charities play?



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Get in touch

To get in touch with more ideas about this project, and for access to the full discussion paper, please contact Patrick Swain:

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References

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