Health system enablers to child vaccination in Israel: The empowering example of the Arab Minority in Israel - A Qualitative Study

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Introduction

- The World Health Organization (WHO) Immunization Agenda 2030 has placed equity as a strategic priority for immunization programmes.
- Underserved populations, including socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, cultural or religious minorities, and migrants, achieve substantially lower vaccine uptake compared to the general population.
- Some disadvantaged populations, such as the Arab minority in Israel, do manage to achieve uptake similar or higher than the general population.
- Arab minority in Israel:
  - Over 1.9 million Arabs in Israel
  - Constitute 21% of the total population
  - Despite being a disadvantaged minority population with wide gaps in health indicators, Arabs have higher Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccination rates compared with the general Jewish population.

This study aimed to identify and describe healthcare system enablers to child vaccination, specifically MMR and HPV vaccines in the Arab population in Israel.

Methods

In-depth interviews to collect information about health system enablers to HPV and MMR vaccination were conducted with:
- Health care providers.
- Arab mothers.
- Arab teenage girls.

All interviews were:
- Conducted in Arabic by an Arab researcher.
- Audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis of the transcripts.

Themes were mapped according to the WHO Health Systems Building Block Framework.

Results

We interviewed 21 health professionals (mean age 44 years old and 16 years of experience), 16 mothers (mean age 43 years old) and 16 teenagers (mean age 14 years old).

Several health system enablers were identified.

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<th>Service delivery enablers</th>
<th>Health workforce enablers</th>
<th>Health information system enablers</th>
<th>Financial enablers</th>
<th>Leadership/governance enablers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Accessible and availability of vaccination services</td>
<td>Personable characteristics of the health workforce</td>
<td>Service and health information available in Arabic</td>
<td>Vaccinations offered at no cost</td>
<td>Vaccine and health services offered equally to Arab community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delivery of vaccines through the school system and mother child clinics</td>
<td>Health care providers belonging to the same cultural group</td>
<td>- High levels of trust towards healthcare professionals</td>
<td>- Reminders and recalls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendly and welcoming clinic environment</td>
<td>- Belief that health professionals most knowledgeable when it comes to vaccination</td>
<td>- Service and health information available in Arabic</td>
<td>- Vaccinations offered at no cost</td>
<td>- Vaccine and health services offered equally to Arab community</td>
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</table>

Despite high vaccine uptakes, parents and teens had limited knowledge regarding vaccination, particularly HPV.

Conclusions

This research provides important insights in health system enablers regarding HPV and MMR vaccination among the Arab minority in Israel. Such evidence can serve as a basis for interventions and guidance to improve vaccine uptake among other underserved minority communities in Europe. Several recommendations, predominantly those not rooted deeply in culture, may be transferred to other disadvantaged minority groups.