

Abstract

Attitudes and beliefs on HPV infection and vaccination II

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Background: Cervical cancer is the second most common type of cancer in women. The majority of cervical cancer cases are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). Three vaccines have been approved to prevent HPV infection and related diseases.

Objectives: The study aimed to analyse the knowledge and attitudes regarding HPV, cervical cancer and HPV vaccination in secondary school students in the Czech Republic.

Methods: The study was carried out in May 2017 at four secondary schools. A questionnaire used for data collection comprised 15 items including questions on demographic characteristics, knowledge about cervical cancer and HPV, vaccination coverage, HPV perceived susceptibility and seriousness, and beliefs on HPV vaccination.

Results: A total of 667 students participated (mean age: 16.8 y ± 1.18; 63% female); 20.5% were smokers, 24.7% God believers. Most of the students (97.0%) heard about cervical cancer and penile cancer, significant proportion (68.3%) knew HPV was the causative factor. Half of the respondents (49.9%) have heard about vaccination against HPV. Among cervical cancer risk factors HPV infection was reported in 58.1% cases followed by promiscuity (14.5%), irregular gynaecological screening (6.8%), immunity disturbances (4.2%), having sexual intercourse at an early age (1.7%), 12.6% did not know. Only 37.8% had been vaccinated against HPV (female: 56.5%; male: 5.7%). The main reported reasons for not being vaccinated were concerns about vaccine safety, HPV vaccine cost, doubts on vaccine effectiveness, distrust of vaccines, the vaccine has not been offered. Women compared to men had more concerns about HPV infection and probably for this reason women were more convinced of HPV vaccination importance.

Conclusion: Knowledge about HPV, cervical cancer/penile cancer and HPV vaccine may influence attitudes to HPV vaccination and are important predictors in HPV vaccination uptake. Making information widely available would help to make informed decisions and improve HPV vaccine acceptance.