



Vaccination and trust

How concerns arise and the role of communication in mitigating crises



Individual
decisions



Risk
perception



Culture and
social norms



Effect of
building trust



World Health
Organization

Abstract

When situations occur in which unwanted events are rightly or wrongly connected with vaccination, they may erode confidence in vaccines and the authorities delivering them.

This document presents the scientific evidence behind WHO's recommendations on building and restoring confidence in vaccines and vaccination, both in ongoing work and during crises. The evidence draws on a vast reserve of laboratory research and fieldwork within psychology and communication. It examines how people make decisions about vaccination; why some people are hesitant about vaccination; and the factors that drive a crisis, covering how building trust, listening to and understanding people, building relations, communicating risk and shaping messages to the audiences may mitigate crises.

This document provides a knowledge base for stakeholders who develop communication strategies or facilitate workshops on communication and trust-building activities in relation to vaccines and immunization, such as immunization programme units, ministries of health, public relations and health promotion units, vaccine safety communication trainers and immunization advisory bodies.

Keywords

VACCINATION
TRUST
COMMUNICATION

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Layout – Alexandra Hayes

Illustrations – Maria Edith Nielsen

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Acknowledgements

This document was developed with funding from the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework by Cornelia Betsch (Scientific Manager, University of Erfurt, Germany), Constanze Rossmann (Professor, University of Erfurt, Germany) and Katrine Bach Habersaat (Technical Officer, Vaccine-preventable Diseases and Immunization Programme, WHO Regional Office for Europe). Dina Pfeiffer (Technical Officer, Vaccine-preventable Diseases and Immunization Programme, WHO Regional Office for Europe) reviewed and provided input to the document. Cindy Holtmann, Lars Korn, Linda Mummer, Philipp Moritz Schmid and Jascha Wiehn (Research Assistants, University of Erfurt, Germany) also contributed to its development.



The current document is a further development of the guidance manual *Vaccine safety events: managing the communications response*, published by the WHO Regional Office for Europe in 2013.

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Introduction

Vaccines are some of the most efficient public health tools for promoting health and reducing the burden of infectious diseases. They also translate into significant socioeconomic returns *(1)* not only in child health and lower child mortality but also in poverty reduction, equity, production, education and strengthening health systems as a whole.

Vaccines are very safe. Nevertheless, vaccine safety receives public scrutiny, and rightly so. When situations occur in which unwanted events are rightly or wrongly connected with vaccination, they may erode confidence in vaccines and the authorities delivering them, and may ultimately put public health at risk. WHO recommends that Member States should:

- build population resilience against vaccine rumours and scares through ongoing activities;
- ensure a strong programme, well prepared to respond to any event that may potentially erode confidence;
- respond immediately to any such event with appropriate actions based on an assessment of the situation.

Together, this may prevent a situation from escalating into a crisis, or minimize the damaging effects of a crisis.



Scope and purpose

This document was developed in response to a call from Member States for technical support and guidance in relation to building and maintaining confidence in vaccines and the authorities delivering them, both in ongoing work and during a crisis. Its development was guided by lessons learnt in countries and with the active engagement of national immunization managers and partners, primarily through subregional workshops held across the WHO European Region.

The purpose of this document is to present the scientific evidence behind WHO's recommendations on building and restoring confidence in vaccines and vaccination, both in the course of ongoing communication efforts and during a crisis.

The evidence draws on a vast reserve of laboratory research and fieldwork within psychology and communication, and covers the following areas:

- how people make decisions about vaccination – how they perceive risk, and how their decisions are affected by their attitudes, social norms and culture;
- why some people are hesitant about vaccination and how this may increase the risk of a crisis;
- what makes a crisis and how building trust (listening

Target audience

This document was developed for stakeholders who want to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues surrounding communication and confidence-building in relation to vaccines and vaccination. It provides a foundation and knowledge base for those who are in charge of developing communication strategies or who facilitate training workshops on communication and trust-building activities in this area. Users of this document may include:

- immunization programme managers and staff;
- managers and staff in ministries of health;
- regulatory authorities for medicines, drugs and biologicals
- public relations and health promotion units;
- trainers offering workshops on vaccine safety and vaccine safety communication;
- media trainers;
- national and regional immunization advisory bodies.

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