

TRAINING OF NURSE, MIDWIFE AND MEDICAL STUDENTS IN VACCINOLOGY: BENCHMARKING EXERCISE IN EUROPE

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Background: Most health consumers consider the healthcare worker as their major source of information on immunisation and vaccine safety. Within the Vaccine Safety, Attitudes, Training and Communication (VACSATC) EU-project a specific work package is focusing on the possible improvements of the pre-service training.

Methods: Surveys to benchmark the pre-service training about knowledge, skills and competences towards immunisation were distributed to students and curriculum managers of medical schools, universities and nursing training institutions in the participating EU countries.

Results: Valid responses of 178 medical and paramedical students and 82 curricula managers were collected from 5 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Slovenia and Sweden). Although the response rate was low in most countries, consistent trends were observed. In most institutions training on vaccines and immunisation is disseminated over a wide range of courses over several academic years. Topics as immunology and vaccine preventable diseases are well covered during the pre-service training. Major gaps in knowledge and competences were identified towards vaccine safety, communication with parents, addressing anti-vaccine arguments and practical skills. 97% of the students confirmed that vaccination is an important medical act and 85% indicated they needed more training on immunization.

Conclusions: Immunisation is one of the corner stones of public health. Doctors, nurses and midwives, regardless if they are involved in immunisation or not, are an important source of information for the public and should be appropriately and timely trained for that role. Opportunities for improvement of the pre-service training were identified.