

VAC_18 - Analysis of the possible factors associated with a low vaccination coverage among health science undergraduates

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Introduction: Vaccine hesitancy is one of the biggest health threats in the world, also affecting Health Care Workers (HCW). Previous studies showed low vaccination rates among Brazilian health science students. As role models, evaluating their vaccination status and understanding this issue is of utmost importance.

Objectives: To evaluate possible factors related to vaccine hesitancy and coverage amid health science undergraduates.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted from July/2021 to November/2022. A total of 645 students of all health science courses of Universidade Federal Fluminense answered online forms regarding vaccines and vaccine hesitancy. Vaccination records were checked for adult's vaccines (tetanus and diphtheria, measles, mumps and rubella, hepatitis B, and yellow fever), and for the vaccines indicated for HCWs (adult's vaccines plus influenza, hepatitis A, varicella and meningococcal). To investigate the association of vaccination hesitancy factors with complete vaccination schedules, chi-square or Fisher exact tests were used and $P < 0.05$ was considered.

Results: Over 90% of the students trust in the vaccination's benefits from serious diseases, also being sure about the necessity of vaccinating. However, only 6.7% of them had a complete HCWs' vaccination schedule, without difference among courses. This rate increases to 57.2% considering adult vaccines. Medicine students showed the highest adult's vaccination coverage (65.3%), in contrast to Nutrition students (41.5%, $P=0.023$). ($P=0.003$) and their cost ($P=0.024$) were associated with adult's incomplete schedules. Uncertainty of vaccine manufacturing was associated with HCW's ($P=0.001$) and adult's ($P=0.05$) incomplete schedules. No associations were found between updated HCWs vaccination and distrust in vaccines nor their cost, which also happened when both schedules were analyzed with gender and the following vaccination factors: the trust in its benefits, the protection against serious diseases and the access for getting vaccinated.

Conclusion: Health science students have a very positive attitude towards vaccination. However their knowledge and commitment with the schedule were insufficient and should be better addressed during their courses.

Keywords: undergraduate students, vaccination status, vaccination hesitancy