

**Sub-optimal influenza vaccine uptake amongst student healthcare workers in South Africa**  
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**Background:** Influenza vaccination is recommended for healthcare workers (HCWs), including student HCWs, due to increased risk of exposure to influenza in their work and learning environments. However, there are concerns with costs. Data on influenza vaccine uptake among student HCWs is limited.

**Objectives:** To investigate influenza vaccine uptake and reasons for vaccination decisions amongst student HCWs.

**Methods:** Descriptive study using an electronic self-administered structured questionnaire amongst final year health sciences students at a South African university. Data were captured using Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> and imported to IBM SPSS<sup>®</sup> Statistics for descriptive statistical analysis.

**Results:** Most respondents were female (61.9% [140/226]), Black African (94.7% [214/226]), from the School of Medicine (41.2% [93/226]), with mean age 23.9±3.7 years. Although 75.2% (170/226) of students knew that vaccination is the most effective strategy to prevent influenza, uptake was low (21.7% [49/226]; 2020 season). The main reason for accepting influenza vaccination was to protect themselves (67.3% [33/49]). Reasons for non-vaccination included: '*Influenza is a mild disease and no need to be vaccinated*' (28.8% [51/177]) and '*Do not believe in the influenza vaccine*' (8.5% (15/177); lack of access: '*Did not get a chance to get the influenza vaccine*' (25.4% [45/177]) and no information: '*Never heard of the influenza vaccine*' (14.1% [25/177]).

**Conclusions:** Influenza vaccine uptake by student HCWs was low due to reasons related to vaccine hesitancy, lack of access and no information. Education about, and access to influenza vaccination for student HCWs must be strengthened.