

2009 International Campbell Collaboration (C2) Colloquium

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Abstract Information

Abstract Title:

A Systematic Review of Intervention Strategies to Promote Childhood Vaccination: Focus On Education

Format:

Paper

Themes:

Systematic reviews, public health and vaccination, children's health, communicating with the public, education

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Abstract:

Background: Childhood vaccinations are a global priority, and central to preventative health programmes worldwide, saving lives as well as generating wider economic and social returns. In Britain, vaccination has long been integral to a wider strategy of disease prevention. Public perceptions of vaccine safety, and the corresponding risk of contagion, are one of many factors individuals take into account when deciding whether or not to vaccinate their children. Public health programmes increasingly rely on educational interventions to promote better health in the general population, and health promotion is the primary tool used to challenge perceptions of the risks involved, but doubts have risen as to whether simply increasing information is the most effective response. Within a systematic review of experimental and quasi-experimental strategies to promote vaccination in children, studies focussing on educational strategies were identified. This paper will focus on these strategies. Objective: To systematically review the available evidence on how effective different types of schemes were at increasing uptake of routine childhood vaccines, based on the Cochrane guidelines for good practice. This encompassed all possible interventions, whether patient-focussed, practitioner-focussed, or wider system changes. Methods: Papers published between 1980-2006* were identified using a combination of electronic database searches, bibliography searches and hand searches. Studies were eligible if they included an intervention intended to change uptake of routine childhood immunizations, assessed the effect of that intervention, and were either a randomised controlled trial or a well-conducted quasi-experimental design. There were no language restrictions. A total of 972 potential papers were identified by the searches, of which 67 original primary research papers were eligible for inclusion in the review. *please note that the review will be updated prior to the conference so this information may subsequently change. Results: Of the papers included in the review, 31 papers dealt with patient reminder recall, 6 with patient education, 3 with community outreach, 4 with patient financial incentives, and 4 with comparisons across multiple categories. Practitioner interventions included 3 on practitioner reminder/feedback, 3 on financial inducements, and one each on provider education and case management. Nine papers dealt with multiple cross-category interventions, while one paper considered the delivery of vaccines and one evaluated care plan changes. Information on the costs or cost-effectiveness of these interventions was limited. The review was limited in some areas by the lack of primary research available, but indicated that multiple strategies were the most effective approach, having a cumulative effect and increasing uptake at the margin. Educational interventions are infrequently and often poorly evaluated, particularly in contrast to the level of political support for their use. Taking into account the wider literature and under-evaluated international approaches, a range of possible strategies for Britain to consider are presented for discussion and evaluation, and the political and economic ramifications of these considered, to highlight potentially fruitful areas for future research.
