

A cross sectional survey to evaluate knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAPS) regarding seasonal influenza and influenza vaccination among diabetics in Pretoria.

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Background: In South Africa, influenza vaccination is recommended to all diabetics. However, vaccination coverage among diabetics remains low. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and practices among people with diabetes in Pretoria regarding seasonal influenza and influenza vaccination.

Method: A cross-sectional survey was conducted among type 1 and 2 diabetes mellitus patients who attended diabetic clinics in two major tertiary hospitals in Pretoria, South Africa from October to December 2015. The pilot-tested questionnaire consists of 32 quantitative questions that covered seasonal influenza and influenza vaccination in terms of the patient's demographics, medical history and knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Results: A total of 292 completed questionnaires were received with a response rate of 70.0%. Of these, 162 participants (55.5%) believed that influenza is the same as common cold. While 96 (32.9%) participants were aware that they were at higher risk of complications of influenza, only 86 (29.5%)

participants considered vaccination as an effective means in preventing serious influenza-related complication. Even though 167 (57.2%) participants had heard of the vaccine to prevent influenza, only 84 (28.8%) participants were previously vaccinated. Multivariate analysis shows that participants with good attitude score for influenza vaccination were 18.4 times more likely to be vaccinated compared with those with poor attitude score (OR =18.4, 95%CI. 5.28–64.10, $p = .001$). Among those previously vaccinated, advice from their doctors (82/84, 97.6%) was the main factor encouraging vaccination. Top reasons given by participants who had never been vaccinated before (208/292, 71.2%) include use of alternative protection (107/208, 51.4%) and that vaccination is not necessary because flu is just a minor illness (93/208, 44.7%).

Conclusion: Uptake of seasonal vaccination among diabetics in Pretoria is low. Level of knowledge and perception are the main barriers to vaccination. Health care provider's advice may be an important key predictor of previous influenza vaccination and they should continue to educate and encourage all diabetics to get vaccinated for influenza at least once yearly.