

**Early vaccination: what dissuades parents from vaccinating their children?**

Dania Aijaz Shah

Madam, early vaccination is an effective means of preventing diseases ranging from common ones such as flu, pneumonia, measles, and mumps to some of the devastating sorts like polio, meningitis and cervical cancers.<sup>1</sup> However, immunization facilities are yet to benefit a large number of children, owing to the reluctance of parents to vaccinate.

A major setback to the prospect of early vaccination results from lack of doctor-patient communication. This missing link serves as a precursor to the inadequate knowledge of parents regarding vaccination and mistrust in their child's doctor. Philp J Smith et al reports parents who vaccinate their children on time are more likely to trust their physician than those who do not.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, parents are found to harbour negative perceptions on the content of vaccines or simply do not believe in the necessity of certain important ones. Researchers of a paediatric study found that non-vaccination of children resulted in California's worst whooping cough outbreak in 2010.<sup>3</sup> Children, who become infected with the disease are likely to pass it on to other children or people with weak immunity. Parents are merely under the false impression that loading their child with innumerable vaccines could disturb their immunity development.<sup>3</sup> A retrospective study conducted in Kenya about seasonal influenza vaccine reports that parents aren't anxious of their child catching flu and hence, do not feel the need to vaccinate their child against it, when annual shots of flu vaccine are necessary between the 6th month and second year of life.<sup>1,4</sup>

It has been noted that parents from lower socio-economic

status are less likely to vaccinate their children than those from higher socio-economic status.<sup>5</sup> This could be attributed to the low literacy level prevalent especially in mothers, or inability of such parents to fully access the immunization services.<sup>5</sup>

In the light of above-mentioned evidences, improving parental knowledge about routine vaccination and their misperceptions through past events and seminars is important. Maintenance of a healthy relationship between paediatricians and parents, dispensing vaccination facilities especially in areas where immunization rate is low and frequent distribution of pamphlets, listing the names of vaccines and the age it should be administered, are some recommended actions. Role of mass media such as television, billboards, newspapers in increasing awareness of early vaccination and focused information imparted to parents by health workers would prove beneficial.

**References**

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Medical Student, Dow Medical College, Karachi.

**Correspondence:** Email: [dania.aijaz.shah@gmail.com](mailto:dania.aijaz.shah@gmail.com)