The Effect of Structured Counseling Given to Parents Influenced by Social Media on Vaccine Hesitancy: An Intervention Study

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Context:

Social media is an important source through which misinformation and disinformation that cause parents to hesitate about vaccines spreads rapidly. Family physicians, thanks to the continuous and trust-based relationship they establish with parents, are in a unique position to reduce this information pollution and provide evidence-based guidance.

Objective:

To evaluate the effect of brief and structured counseling delivered by family physicians on vaccine hesitancy and vaccination decisions among parents who are influenced by social media.

Methods:

This randomized controlled study will be conducted in the family medicine clinics of the training family health centers (EASM) of İzmir Dokuz Eylul University. Parents of children aged 0–5 years who report social media as their main source of vaccine information and who have high vaccine hesitancy (according to the PACV score) will be included in the study. After the baseline assessment (PACV score, sociodemographic data, and the child's vaccination status), participants will be randomly assigned to the intervention or usual-care group. In the intervention group, family physicians will conduct an approximately 10–15-minute structured face-to-face counseling session focusing on common myths, vaccine safety, and the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases, and will provide an evidence-based information leaflet. The control group will receive routine counseling. PACV scores and on-time vaccination status will be reassessed 1–3 months later.

Planned results:

The study is in the planning phase. In the intervention group, compared with usual care, a greater decrease in PACV scores and a higher rate of on-time vaccination are targeted.

Conclusion:

If found effective, this individualized, brief, and structured counseling, tailored to parents influenced by social media, may be recommended to be integrated into routine family medicine practice as a practical communication strategy against vaccine hesitancy.