Research agenda to improve communication around influenza vaccination: progress and way forward

Jan Hendriks
Natasha de Francisco Serpa (Shapovalova)
Why do we need research?

- **H1N1(2009) pandemic lesson:**
  - Lack of common understanding and trust between health agencies and public
  - Countries ask WHO to develop evidence based communication strategies

- **WHO perspective:**
  - Need for robust scientific knowledge
  - Hence need for a research agenda covering all relevant research topic areas, categories of research methodologies that provide evidence for impact on public health policies
Aim of the Research Agenda

In short term:
- Builds trust
- Increases influenza vaccine uptake

In long term:
- Saves lives
- Reduces health costs and economic losses
- Mitigates social disruption
What has been done so far?

- **Public Health Research Agenda for Influenza and the Global Consultation** (2009)
- **WHO Public Health Research Agenda for Influenza** (2009)
- **GAP II Consultation** (2013)
- **International Health Regulations (2011)**
- **Regional adaptation of Research Agenda: AFRO, SEARO, PAHO, EMRO** (2011)
- **IHR Review Committee: Rec 15: WHO should pursue a comprehensive influenza research and evaluation programme, incl. risk communication** (2011)
- **Atlanta Workshop to Enhance Communication around Influenza Vaccination** (2013)
2009: Public Health Research Agenda for Influenza: *influenza vaccination research topics*

- **Seasonal and pandemic vaccine acceptability**
- **Understanding audiences: cultural sensitivities**
- **How to build well-targeted communication messages**
- **Understanding the origin and spread of myths and rumours and how to effectively counter them**
- **Communication of vaccine effectiveness trials in countries with little familiarity with influenza**

*Sources:*
WHO Public Health Research Agenda for Influenza, WHO, 2009
Report of the First Global Consultation on WHO Public Health Research Agenda for Influenza, 17-20 November 2009
2010: Workshop on Modern Tools for Strategic Communication: *influenza vaccination research topics*

- Development and effectiveness evaluation of communication to facilitate vaccination uptake in a) health care personnel, b) key public service personnel, c) risk groups, and d) the general public

- Review international evidence and experience on health and health crisis communication by reviewing professional literature from relevant disciplines and credible evidence sources, such as behavioural and social sciences, media studies, social marketing and gather and organize knowledge, as well as stimulate new studies in areas where gaps have been identified to support evidence-based practice in strategic communication

- Identify, develop and evaluate communication tools and methods to more rapidly and accurately assess and monitor knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices in different population groups over time to guide communication efforts

- Identify, develop and evaluate communication tools and approaches for communicating in different population groups & cultural settings, which engage and empower individuals and communities to practice and promote appropriate risk reduction measures

- Understand the dynamics of inaccurate and contradictory information, rumours, myths and narratives through tracking, monitoring and analyzing different communication sources and channels and to develop effective ways to respond

- Understand the potential ethical, social, economic and political dimensions of communicating in national and international crisis situations and develop strategies for working within constraints and maximizing opportunities.

Disciplines represented:
anthropology, marketing, communication, media research, behavioural and social sciences

Source:
Shapovalova N, Tam J, Shindo N, Briand S "WHO public health research agenda for influenza: Workshop on Modern Tools for Strategic Communication" (Options for the Control of Influenza VII, Hong Kong SAR - September, 2010), p 266
2.1.5 Operational research

Operational research in support of seasonal vaccination programmes is under way in a number of areas but more is required, for example on vaccine efficacy, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, especially in developing countries. At present, indications of an association between high influenza vaccination rates and subsequent lowered incidence of illness in some countries must be carefully evaluated. Other areas of operational research include the further development of effective communication approaches and optimum vaccine-deployment strategies.

3. Proposed actions in key areas

Communication and awareness

- Effective and targeted communication strategies should continue to be developed and shared for specific audiences to promote the uptake of seasonal influenza vaccines among the public and among health professionals.

- Vaccination outcomes other than influenza prevention should be assessed and communicated to resonate with the concerns of decision-makers and the public. Such outcomes should include the impact of influenza vaccination on maternal and child health, on rates of pneumonia and associated deaths in all age groups, and on health-care infrastructures and service quality.

Operational research

- A toolkit listing all the requirements needed to successfully implement GAP-related activities in countries should be developed. This should cover issues such as vaccine effectiveness and safety monitoring, health-economics and cost-effectiveness studies, and the development of communication and advocacy packages.
Way forward...

.... Plan to develop a GAP research agenda for communication on influenza vaccination....
Terminology and definitions

Objectives and methods of communication for vaccination (pandemic and seasonal)

Context analysis

Audience analysis

Messages

Messenger

Monitoring and Evaluation
Research topics identified over the past 3 days

- What (evidence) is needed to develop optimal vaccination messages?
Some lessons from Atlanta

− F5

− **IDEA** and Compassion
  
  - people will not care what we know, until they now how much we care about we know
  
− Do something different (avoid marriage fights)

− We focus too much on explanation;
  
  - work on **relations** to get internalization done:
    
    - The other one has to have the feeling to be understood, then information flows
    
Some lessons from Atlanta

- M&E
  
  • Meaningful metrics:
    - Exposure and awareness minimally helpful
    - Communication needs to be connected to desired outcomes
  
  • Methods and design
    - Surveys, interviews, observations
    - Design best practices for each method
Next steps...

- Finalize the **Research Agenda for Communication on Influenza Vaccination**
- **Stakeholder** analysis and mapping (by region)
- Further alignment with **related initiatives**
- Include Research Agenda at the **Vaccine Safety Communication workshop in Tunis, 3-4 July 2013**
- Enhance a **global research network**
Contacts:

Jan Hendriks  
GAP Project Manager  
hendriksj@who.int

Dr Natasha de Francisco Serpa (Shapovalova),  
GAP Technical Officer  
shapovalovanan@who.int

GAP web site:  
http://www.who.int/influenza_vaccines_plan/en/

Key information available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish