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Trends in vaccination in the area of Split-Dalmatia County

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While attempting to contain the new coronavirus SarsCoV2, and associated pandemic, by trying to implement epidemiological measures, the world is placing its hope in science and the production of an effective and safe vaccine. COVID-19 primarily endangers the health of the elderly and other at-risk populations, whereas in the past, infectious diseases (such as diphtheria, tetanus, tuberculosis, pertussis, mumps, measles, poliomyelitis) primarily affected younger age groups; that is, until the discovery of vaccines in the 20th century.

In Croatia, since 1995, as a result of the reorganisation of the health care system, health standards in the general population improved. In the Split-Dalmatian County, between 2001 and 2010, vaccination coverage increased from 93% to 96% for the following vaccines: DTP, polio, Hib, MMR and Hepatitis B. An extremely high vaccination coverage of 98% was achieved among school aged children, as part of the public health system.

Increasing vaccination coverage was documented in other WHO regions during the same period. As a result, some infectious diseases were eradicated, whereas other were significantly reduced.

Since 2011, a drop in vaccination coverage in Croatia has been documented, especially for the primary vaccination of young children. A constant negative trend toward vaccinations is present, as a result of an 'antivaccination climate' among the general public, which has been noted in other countries as well. Parents are becoming fearful and sceptical of vaccines and as a result are postponing vaccinating their children. Evidence-based public health campaigns aimed at educating and counselling parents, along with supporting primary health care providers, has led to a slowing down of this negative trend and returning trust in vaccines.

It's necessary to continue systematically investing time and effort into informing and communicating with parents, patients and the general public on the importance of vaccines as a vital preventive measure.