

The challenges to schoolchildren immunization

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Abstract:

Vaccination policy is incorporated into national health policies around the world, and the enlargement of vaccination coverage is an integral part of a well-organized and efficient health system. In the Republic of Croatia, compulsory and non-compulsory recommended immunization is performed according to the Vaccination Schedule where each healthy child enrolling into school (aged 6-7 years) is revaccinated with the MMR vaccine (Measles, Mumps, Rubella). According to a retrospective analysis of health data from the school health records of 4161 children enrolling into the first grade of primary school in the school year 2018/2019, the MMR vaccine achieved 91.5% coverage. Among 326 unvaccinated children, permanent contraindications were determined in 10.1% of children, temporary contraindications for 2.4% whereas 87.5% of unvaccinated children had no contraindications. During the first appointment in the clinic, 81.5% (3184) of children were immunized, whereas 18.6% (651) of children were subsequently immunized. Not a single dose of MMR vaccine was given to 2.6% of children who were primovaccinated. Vaccination is one of the most efficient medical interventions reducing inequities in access to healthcare. The growing resistance to vaccines has increased global health risks requiring more efficient interventions of health workers. Health workers should impartially and objectively present accurate scientific information as well as encourage and strengthen responsibility of parents in order to provide them with the capacity and competence to make appropriate health decisions.

Curriculum vitae:

Prim. Željka Karin, PhD, MD, Specialist in School and Adolescent Medicine, is the Director of the Public Health Institute of Split and Dalmatian County as well as the Head of Department of School and Adolescent Medicine. She is the first Vice-president of the Croatian Society for School and University Medicine as well as a member of the Management Board of the European Society for School and Adolescent Medicine. Željka is a member of the Civil Protection Headquarters for Split and Dalmatian County COVID-19 committee. For more than twenty years she has provided children and adolescents with healthcare, for which she has been acknowledged. She is the author of several professional and scientific papers dealing with health issues of schoolchildren and adolescents.