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Feelings of pre-adolescents and adolescents regarding vaccination against human papillomavirus

ABSTRACT | Objective: to identify the feelings of pre-adolescents and adolescents regarding vaccination against human papillomavirus. Method: this is a phenomenological study, with a qualitative approach, carried out with 10 participants, being pre-adolescents and adolescents, whose vaccinations were performed in the vaccination room of a Basic Health Unit in a municipality in Minas Gerais. The testimonies were recorded and transcribed in full for later analysis. The treatment of the data took place through Content Analysis. Results: most interviewees attributed the meaning of vaccination to the fact that it prevents cervical cancer. The lack of knowledge about the purpose of the HPV vaccine is evident in some statements. The fear of the vaccine was also in evidence, justified by the fact that it was an injection, pain, needle and for fear of the reaction. As preventive measures, the use of condoms and periodic visits to the gynecologist were mentioned. Six of the participants were unable to report any preventive measures against human papillomavirus. Conclusion: the participants understand the importance of vaccination against human papillomavirus, although six participants, as well as their families, reported being afraid of the pain of vaccination or possible post-vaccination adverse events.

Keywords: Perception; Adolescent; Vaccination; Papillomavirus vaccines; Public health nursing.

RESUMEN | Objetivo: identificar los sentimientos de preadolescentes y adolescentes con respecto a la vacunación contra el virus del papiloma humano. Método: se trata de un estudio fenomenológico, con abordaje cualitativo, realizado con 10 participantes, siendo preadolescentes y adolescentes, cuyas vacunaciones se realizaron en la sala de vacunación de una Unidad Básica de Salud de un municipio de Minas Gerais. Los testimonios fueron registrados y transcritos íntegramente para su posterior análisis. El tratamiento de los datos se realizó mediante Análisis de Contenido. Resultados: la mayoría de las entrevistadas atribuyó la importancia de la vacunación relacionada con el hecho de prevenir el cáncer de cuello uterino. La falta de conocimiento sobre el propósito de la vacuna contra el VPH es evidente en algunas declaraciones. El miedo a la vacuna también se evidenció, justificado por el hecho de que fue una inyección, dolor, aguja y por miedo a la reacción. Como medidas preventivas se mencionaron el uso de condones y visitas periódicas al ginecólogo. Seis de los participantes no pudieron informar ninguna medida preventiva contra el virus del papiloma humano. Conclusión: los participantes del estudio comprenden la importancia de la vacunación contra el virus del papiloma humano, aunque seis participantes, así como sus familiares, informaron tener miedo al dolor de la vacunación o posibles eventos adversos posvacunación.

Palabras claves: Percepción; Adolescente; Vacunación; Vacunas contra papillomavirus; Enfermería en salud pública.

RESUMO | Objetivo: identificar os sentimentos de pré-adolescentes e adolescentes quanto à vacinação contra o papilomavirus humano. Método: trata-se de um estudo fenomenológico, com abordagem qualitativa, realizado com 10 participantes, sendo pré-adolescentes e adolescentes, cujas quais foram vacinadas na sala de vacina de uma Unidade Básica de Saúde de um município de Minas Gerais. Os depoimentos foram gravados e transcritos na íntegra para posterior análise. O tratamento dos dados se deu por meio de Análise de Conteúdo. Resultados: a maioria das entrevistadas atribuiu à significação da vacinação relacionada ao fato de prevenir o câncer de colo uterino. O desconhecimento sobre a finalidade da vacina HPV fica em evidência em alguns depoimentos. O medo da vacina também ficou em evidência, tendo como justificativa o fato de ser injeção, da dor, da agulha e por medo da reação. Como medidas de prevenção, foram citadas o uso de preservativo e a ida periódica ao ginecologista. Seis das participantes não souberam informar nenhuma medida de prevenção contra o papilomavirus humano. Conclusão: as participantes do estudo entendem a importância da vacinação contra o papilomavirus humano, embora seis participantes, bem como suas famílias, informaram ter receio pela dor da vacinação ou possíveis eventos adversos pós-vacinais.

Palavras-chaves: Percepção; Adolescente; Vacinação; Vacinas contra papilomavirus; Enfermagem em saúde pública.

Patrick Leonardo Nogueira da Silva

Nurse, Master's Student at the Postgraduate Program in Primary Health Care at the State University of Montes Claros (PPGCPS / UNIMONTES). Montes Claros, MG, Brazil.

ORCID: 0000-0003-2399-9526

Fabiana Gomes Santos Martins

Nurse by the Integrated Colleges Pitágoras de Montes Claros (FIPMOC). Montes Claros, MG, Brazil.

ORCID: 0000-0002-0645-6151

Ana Patrícia Fonseca Coelho Galvão

Nurse, Master in Health and Environment, Professor in the Nursing Department at Ceuma University (UNICEUMA). São Luís, MA, Brazil.

ORCID: 0000-0003-3376-5678

Simone Guimarães Teixeira Souto

Nurse, Master of Nursing, Professor, Department of Nursing, State University of Montes Claros (UNIMONTES). Montes Claros, MG, Brazil.

ORCID: 0000-0003-0562-005X

Ricardo Soares de Oliveira

Nurse, Master in Primary Health Care from the State University of Montes Claros (UNIMONTES). Montes Claros, MG, Brazil.

ORCID: 0000-0002-4660-6038

Igor Monteiro Lima Martins

Nurse, Master in Health Sciences, Professor at the Nursing Department of the Integrated Colleges of Pitágoras de Montes Claros (FIPMOC). Montes Claros, MG, Brazil.

ORCID: 0000-0002-6126-3387

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INTRODUCTION

Cervical cancer (CC) is the second most incident type of cancer among women in the world, second only to breast cancer. The distribution of cases is more concentrated in developing countries or below the equator, which concurrently have the worst human development rates. ^(1,2) It is estimated about 530 thousand new cases per year with 275 thousand deaths in the world by the CC. Brazil follows in the same direction, adding the information that in 2012 the number of fatal victims exceeded 4800, with an estimate of new cases above 17 thousand per year, with the region with the highest incidence being the Midwest and the one with the lowest the South. ⁽¹⁾

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is actually a family of more than 150 genotypes, all of which are named in ascending order as they were discovered and some strains are closely associated with CC, namely 16 and 18, in order to represent more than 80% of CC cases. The other types, although present, are related to anogenital warts and low-grade intraepithelial lesions. ⁽¹⁾

The quadrivalent HPV vaccine was included in the routine of the Unified Health System (SUS - Sistema Único de Saúde) in the National Immunization Program (PNI - Programa Nacional de Imunização) in March 2014, targeting girls aged 11 to 13 years. The vaccine schedule initially adopted was three doses, with an interval of six months from the first to the second and four years from the second to the third. In 2015, the vaccine offer was extended to girls aged nine to 11 years old. ⁽²⁾ From January 2016, there was a decrease from three to two doses of anti-HPV for girls aged 9 to 13 years. ⁽²⁾ In 2017, the Ministry of Health (MH) made the HPV vaccine available in the age group of 9 to 14 years old (14 years, 11 months and 29 days) for girls, as well as for boys aged 11 to 14 years (14 years, 11 months and 29 days), contemplated

by the PNI, the two doses remaining with a zero and six month scheme. ⁽³⁾

Researchers carried out a quantitative study on the knowledge and attitudes of French women and their daughters aged 14 to 18 with regard to the prevention of CC, and they noted that little has been studied on this subject. At the time, of the 1478 women interviewed, only 16% related HPV to CC, although more than 70% knew about the HPV vaccine. ⁽⁴⁾ In contrast, a qualitative study of eight adolescents in Scotland revealed that there is still a little doubt about the safety of the HPV vaccine, which creates insecurity between parents and adolescents. ⁽⁵⁾

An interesting finding is revealed in another study among young people who did not adopt the HPV vaccine, even though it is available, they reported that monogamy, abstinence and knowledge of their partners' sexual history was sufficient to prevent HPV, demonstrating low level of knowledge about risky and fearful behaviors in relation to the vaccine. ⁽⁶⁾

Due to the high incidence of CC, which has HPV infection as a major risk factor, a factor that can be prevented by the vaccine, among other measures, made available by the Ministry of Health since 2014, it is necessary to identify the perception of pre-adolescents and adolescents regarding this approach to the vaccine and its importance. In fact, do all of them observe from the same point of view, in other words, is CC prevention the main reason for this human action or are there different points of view to be explored?

In view of all these questions and the empirical observation of researchers in loco, for also working in a vaccine room for almost a decade, and perceiving mothers' concern more than young people themselves, the problem posed for the investigation has the following guiding question: what are the feelings of pre-adolescents and adolescents regarding HPV vaccination?

Thus, this study aimed to identify the feelings of pre-adolescents and

adolescents regarding vaccination against HPV.

METHOD

Monograph article entitled "Vaccination against Human Papillomavirus: HPV in the perception of adolescents" (from the original *Vacinação contra o Papilomavírus Humano: HPV na percepção dos adolescentes*) presented to the Nursing Department of Faculdades Integradas Pitágoras de Montes Claros/FIPMoc. Montes Claros (MG), Brazil. 2016.

This is a descriptive, exploratory study with a qualitative approach. The current of theoretical-philosophical thought that outlined this qualitative study is phenomenology, which seeks to bring light, unveil a certain phenomenon from the subject who experiences it or has already experienced it. ⁽⁷⁾ For this purpose, the study was carried out in the vaccination room of the Center for Health Care and Professional Practices (NASPP - Núcleo de Atenção à Saúde e Práticas Profissionalizantes), a school clinic of the Integrated Colleges of Pitágoras de Montes Claros (FIPMOC), in which young women from nine to 14 years who have already received at least one dose of the HPV vaccination schedule, after their mothers and/or guardians signed the Informed Consent Form (ICF) and they signed the Informed Consent Form. The study sample consisted of 10 girls aged 9 to 14 years old who were identified using a code containing a letter of the Latin alphabet and Arabic numbers (E1-E10), in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

A cover letter was sent, along with a copy of the research project and an Institutional Consent Form (TCI) to the NASPP clinical management for authorization of the study. The institution was duly informed about the research guidelines and authorized the study to be carried out by signing the TCI in order to be aware. Data collection was carried out in the first half of 2016, during the months of May and June, by the responsible researcher. The

following inclusion criteria were adopted for participation in the research: (1) being between nine and 14 years old, (2) having a dose of HPV vaccine registered on the vaccination card, (3) being in the presence of the person responsible.

A semi-structured interview was used as a data collection instrument. In addition, a form with guiding questions, of its own elaboration, was used, validated through a pre-test for the adequacy and viability of the research instrument. The interview was recorded using an MP3 audio recorder and later transcribed in full. Allied to this, the use of the field diary, in order to record communication gaps, facial expressions and body positioning, which are not likely to be captured by the audio. A pilot study was carried out with three young people in the aforementioned age group, students from a high school, randomly selected in order to test the understanding of the guiding question and the approach strategy of the researchers.

From the Information System Software of the National Immunization Program (SI-PNI) made available by the Ministry of Health in order to computerize vaccine rooms throughout the country, access to the register of pre-adolescents and adolescents who have already been immunized in the service and by telephone contact, interviews were scheduled at the time most convenient for the participants, as well as their mothers' time, during business hours. The research site was the vaccine room of a school clinic in a city in the north of Minas Gerais.

The number of interviews followed the logic of the saturation point, from the moment the author noticed the recurrence of ideas, that is, when the content of the speeches became repetitive. Although in this sense, literature recommends a maximum of 15 interviews. (8)

After repeated and careful readings of the testimonies, the description of the global meaning of the lived experience was made, the first step of the phenomenological interpretation technique, for later identification and grouping of the

significant aspects of the testimonies, for the composition of the concrete categories - meanings emerged from the lived experiences, generating the second step which is the reduction. (7,9) Finally, to produce the desired understanding of the meaning of the HPV vaccine, from the point of view of the interviewees, who had such an experience.

In this sense, Content Analysis was pertinent, since it initially worked with the significant units contained in the texts transcribed verbatim. The units for the composition of the categories were extracted from the linguistic signs, that is, the word enunciated, declared. In this sense, there is a materiality to be worked on. (10) After analyzing the interviews, it was possible to perceive the level of understanding and maturity of pre-adolescents and adolescents about the vaccine and HPV. Thus, two categories emerged: "Knowing the meaning of the vaccine" and "Knowing about HPV prevention measures".

Within the possible techniques of data interpretation in the perspective of discourse analysis, the scientific literature presents the enunciation analysis that shows a dynamic discourse in which spontaneity and embarrassment are concomitant and starts, first, by observing the logical chain of statements, statements and or judgments. (8)

The study followed the ethical precepts established by Resolution No. 466, of December 12, 2012, of the National Health Council (CNS), which regulates the conduct of research involving human beings. (11) The research project was assessed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculdades Unidas do Norte de Minas (CEP FUNORTE), under the consubstantiated opinion No. 1.477.195, of April 1st, 2016, Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Appreciation (CAAE) No. 53203616.7.0000.5141.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Knowing the meaning of the vaccine

Most respondents attributed the significance of vaccination to the fact that it prevents CC.

I know that it is a vaccine against the virus, you know, that causes cervical cancer. (E1)

CC was one of the cancers that killed people the most. So, with this measure, the government greatly reduced the rate of people having cancer; in this case, the CC. (E3)

I remember that at the time there was a very big campaign, right against this CC, several schools were adopting preventive measures, ta informing us how it is and such. (E4)

The vaccine serves to protect the CC. (E5)

The vaccine serves to prevent CC. (E6)

The vaccine is for some type of cancer. (E7)

Only one of them mentioned that the vaccine prevents against some type of communicable disease.

The vaccine serves to prevent, right, against some type of disease, like, transmissible. (E8)

The meaning of having been vaccinated, by the interviewees, is restricted to the prevention of a disease or cancer. They do not reflect more deeply on the importance of vaccination against a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and its possible social representations. (12-13)

This is a different finding from the one described above, therefore, in contrast, studies carried out with students from nine to 13 years of age, exploratory-descriptive, prospective, based on a quantitative approach, show that the response that most prevailed among girls, after application of the questionnaire (pre-test and post-test), was that the HPV vaccine immunizes against other communicable diseases - although

in the educational lecture given, it was reported to the girls that it only immunizes against the HPV virus. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Participants in another scientific study whose objective was to get to know the social representations of adolescents who experienced the first HPV Vaccination Campaign, demonstrated a certain passivity in relation to the search for knowledge about HPV, considering that they were not interested in deepening information since they received a vaccine that was supposed to be protecting them from illness. The conception that HPV arose from exchanges during the vaccination campaign, which had school and television as the main sources of information, is due to the fact that they associate the etiological agent with a disease that attacks the uterus and that can cause infection so as to need prevention. ^(13,15)

The lack of knowledge about the purpose of the HPV vaccine is evident in the statements of the following interviewees:

She nodded "no" when asked if she knew the purpose of the vaccine. (E2)

Said "no" about the purpose of the vaccine. (E9)

...acho que era pra proteger de alguma coisa. (E10)

This lack of knowledge about the vaccine is not restricted to this age group, because in studies found, of a descriptive, transversal nature, with an intentional sample of 538 users of basic health units (UBS) and two polyclinics of SUS in Campinas/SP, 286 women (18 to 49 years old) and 252 men (18 to 60 years old) - whose objective was to analyze the knowledge of men and women about HPV and vaccines and their intention to be vaccinated and to vaccinate their teenage children - revealed that most of the people interviewed had never heard of HPV or vaccines available in Brazil today, with a smaller proportion of people with correct information about the virus and its consequences. ⁽¹⁶⁻¹⁷⁾

Weaknesses regarding the adolescents' knowledge about HPV, as well as barriers in their relationship with the health service, were also evidenced in another scientific study. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Another item mentioned by this author ⁽¹⁵⁾ it concerns the fact that adolescents do not use the Caderneta do Adolescente as a source of information, since it is one of the instruments built to subsidize actions of the Programa Saúde na Escola (PSE), to which the school is linked.

In this sense, considering the ignorance of the adolescents who started immunization against HPV on the subject, its transmission and causes, which put them in a situation of vulnerability, health education is essential, with the use of different strategies that convey information for this age group in more depth and own vocabulary - since the initiation of sexual activity has been increasingly early. ⁽¹²⁾

The fear of the vaccine was also in evidence, justified by the fact that it was an injection, because of the pain and the needle and for fear of the reaction.

[...] I got the vaccine then I was a little scared, because my colleagues had taken it before and they told me it hurt more than the other vaccines, so I went to take it and I didn't think it hurt so much [...], asked to me to stay there, to see if I had a reaction and it turned out that I had a reaction [...] my pressure went down [...] it didn't hurt too much, just because of having a reaction after I was afraid I had taken a second dose. (E2)

In the beginning, my colleagues had taken it before, so I was a little scared. But then, I said: I think I will have to take it, because I have to protect myself, then [...] when I took the first dose [...] I was not afraid [...], I took and did not feel pain; and I had no symptoms afterwards. On the second, I also took too long, because my colleagues said: Wow! The second is much

worse than the first. [...] then the second one I didn't have anything too, but I was more afraid. (E5)

Nodded "yes" to the fact of being afraid. (E6)

[...] I am very terrified, so I stop being afraid. (E7)

For me it was calm, like, I was scared like that, it will hurt, then it was normal, as if I had taken another type of vaccine, normal. (E8)

Fear, just that it will hurt. (E10)

Some difficulties were observed, after a year of insertion of the HPV vaccine in the PNI, among them: the great resistance of the population, due to the fear of side effects, by the adolescents and their parents, as well as due to the dissemination of information not trusted by social networks. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Thus, access to social networks and the dissemination of content, sometimes erroneous or false, increases resistance to the vaccine. And the dissemination of information about a patient who suffered more intense reactions, causes doubts and insecurity in the parents, who in turn transmit this fear and insecurity to their daughters. (19) In addition, some parents associate the vaccine as a stimulus for sexuality, as it protects against an STI, which they consider to be precocious. ⁽²⁰⁾

There are also religious and national organizations that understand that the vaccine will stimulate early sexual activity, leading to promiscuity. There are even, outside the country, religious entities, such as the American ones, which are absolutely against the use of the HPV vaccine. They advocate total sexual abstinence before marriage, as well as monogamous marriage, as the only way to prevent STIs. ⁽²¹⁾

Therefore, because the immunization of pre-adolescents and adolescents is a difficult decision for parents, it is important that health professionals and schools involve the family in this process, providing updated information and encouraging the vaccination of their daughters. ⁽²²⁾ The

school, in turn, is a favorable environment for the development of health education, as it is here that adolescents receive information and knowledge necessary for both social and personal life. ⁽¹²⁾

Knowing about HPV prevention measures

Regarding knowledge about HPV prevention measures, only one of the interviewees reported using condoms as necessary to prevent the disease.

I know it's past, right, by skin-to-skin contact and that's why it's also a past disease with sexual contact, so prevent it with the use of condoms. [...] I know that in addition to the vaccine, you have to take care of this contact with other people. (E1)

The visit to the gynecologist was regularly reported by the participants as an HPV prevention measure by only one of the interviewees.

I think that [...] in addition to the vaccine, visit the gynecologist regularly, take precautions. (E3)

Six of the interviewees were unable to answer which HPV prevention measures.

Nodded "no" with the head about prevention measures. (E2)

[...] In addition to the vaccine, there are a number of measures, but I don't know what they are. (E4)

Besides the vaccine, I don't know [...], but, it doesn't protect each other, everything. (E5)

No. (E6)

I don't know. (E7)

No. (E9)

I don't know. (E10)

According to a study whose objective was to analyze the bioethical dilemmas regarding the strategy of mass vaccination against HPV, carried out by the Health Department of the Government of the

Federal District in 2014, from the perspective of public managers, one of the difficulties pointed out refers to delicacy to address the STI-related topic with girls who are still discovering their own bodies and experiencing the changes inherent to puberty. ⁽²³⁾ They often do not have the idea that the HPV vaccine only strengthens and is preventive, but does not replace other methods of prevention, such as: CC screening (Pap smear), health education and other STI protection habits; such as condom use. However, even with the use of condoms, there is also the possibility of transmission of HPV, through sexual activities without penetration, as contact with infected skin is sufficient. ⁽¹²⁾



Often, pre-adolescents and adolescents go to the BHU, on the recommendation or requirement of parents and / or family members, or because they have heard about the vaccine, without reflecting on its meaning.



Finally, it should be noted that the HPV vaccine does not replace the CC prevention test and should not be used to treat HPV-related diseases, such as genital warts or cervical, vulvar and vaginal cancers. It is recommended exceptionally for the prevention of HPV types 6, 11, 16

and 18, and, consequently, the diseases related to them. ⁽²⁴⁾

According to studies, preadolescents and adolescents seek little health services, which represents a challenge for successful counseling, in primary care, on how to prevent HPV. They believe that creating counseling strategies that fit heterogeneous populations in relation to cultural values and beliefs, with an emphasis on prevention, including parents in the subject during vaccination, helps to improve communication about the purpose of the vaccine and how to prevent it from the HPV. ^(15,25)

In this sense, it is emphasized that in addition to selecting and transmitting scientifically correct information about HPV, it is necessary to do so according to the capacity of the different social strata that access and process such information. ^(16,25)

CONCLUSION

Although fear is an intrinsic reaction in case of exposure to a risk, it is intensified according to the media's approach to information, which, in turn, will reflect on the attitude of parents and children, being the school, in partnership with UBS, intermediaries in health education for the target audience and family members. It is necessary to have a pleasant welcome to these pre-adolescents and adolescents and their families with information about the vaccine and the importance of immunization. Often, pre-adolescents and adolescents go to the BHU, on the recommendation or requirement of parents and / or family members, or because they have heard about the vaccine, without reflecting on its meaning. It is essential that parents, in partnership with schools, dialogue with this target audience about not only HPV, but about other sexually transmitted diseases - it is essential that UBS managers carry out an integrated work between health professionals, teachers, parents and students, also exploring other media available to them to access and understand information.

Therefore, it is necessary to propose strategies between parents, teachers and health professionals that enable the transmission of information, as well as a constant dialogue with girls, as early discussion contributes to awareness about the impor-

ance of not only getting vaccinated, but to take care of yourself. This makes them feel safe from the knowledge acquired and is not frightened by the news released by untrustworthy sources, in order to provide parental consent to vaccination. As the

HPV vaccine was included in the PNI for boys, it is suggested that this study also be done with them, in order to check their perception of the vaccine, as well as whether the level of understanding and maturity is equivalent in both sexes. 🌱

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