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Original article

Design of a national and regional survey among French general practitioners and method of the first wave of survey dedicated to vaccination

Constitution d'un panel national et régional de médecins généralistes français et méthodologie de la première vague d'enquête consacrée à la vaccination

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Abstract

Objectives. – France is currently facing a vaccine-hesitancy crisis. We conducted a questionnaire-based telephone interview with a large sample of general practitioners (GPs) as they play a crucial role in the vaccination process. Our main objectives were to study the GPs' vaccination behaviors when it comes to their own vaccination and that of their relatives, and the vaccine recommendations made to their patients. We also aimed to understand their opinion related to the severity of vaccine-preventable diseases and to assess their trust in various sources of information. Finally, we enquired about their opinion in terms of vaccination-related tools that could help them in their daily practice. The article aimed to present the design of this panel and survey.

Patients and methods. – Four samples of GPs (one national and three regional) were selected among all the French GPs (metropolitan France) using random sampling. Five cross-sectional surveys should be conducted with that panel. The mean targeted sample size is 2350 GPs for each survey. The survey dedicated to vaccination was conducted by telephone or on the Internet.

Results. – GPs were included in the survey between December 2013 and February 2014. The national sample included 1582 GPs (response rate: 46%) and the three regional samples included 1297 GPs (response rate: 44%). The survey dedicated to vaccination was conducted between April and July 2014; the national sample response rate was 92% (1582/1712).

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Conclusion. – The results of the first wave of surveys, conducted on a large sample of French GPs, provide important information to guide the French vaccination policy.

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Keywords: Family physician; General practitioner; Questionnaires; Vaccination

Résumé

Objectifs. – La France traverse actuellement une crise de confiance envers la vaccination. La vaccination reposant principalement sur l'action des médecins généralistes (MG), nous avons réalisé une enquête téléphonique par questionnaire auprès d'un panel de MG pour étudier : leurs comportements de vaccination pour eux-mêmes et leurs proches ainsi que leurs recommandations de vaccins à leurs patients ; leur perception de la gravité des maladies ciblées par différents vaccins ; leur confiance envers différentes sources d'information ; et leur opinion sur les différents outils qui pourraient les aider dans leur pratique vaccinale quotidienne. Cet article présente la méthodologie de la construction de ce panel et de cette enquête.

Patients et méthodes. – Quatre échantillons (un national et trois régionaux) ont été tirés au sort parmi l'ensemble des MG libéraux exerçant en France métropolitaine. Cinq enquêtes transversales doivent être réalisées dans le cadre de ce panel, avec un effectif moyen ciblé de 2350 MG par enquête. La première vague d'enquêtes dédiées à la vaccination a été réalisée par téléphone mais les médecins le souhaitant pouvaient répondre via Internet.

Résultats. – Les MG ont été inclus entre décembre 2013 et février 2014 : 1712 dans l'échantillon national (taux de participation de 46 %), 1297 dans les 3 échantillons régionaux (taux de participation de 44 %). La vague d'enquêtes dédiées à la vaccination a été effectuée entre avril et juillet 2014, avec un taux de réponse de 92 % (1582/1712) pour l'échantillon national.

Conclusion. – Cette vague d'enquêtes menées auprès d'un large échantillon de MG français apporte des données importantes pour orienter la politique vaccinale de notre pays.

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Mots clés : Médecins généralistes ; Questionnaires ; Vaccination

1. Introduction

Various countries are currently facing a previously unseen vaccination crisis. The biomedical literature defines this crisis as a sign of the public's distrust against vaccination, commonly referred to as "vaccine hesitancy". It is characterized by people refusing vaccination and by incomplete or delayed vaccination process [1,2]. Such behaviors are partly responsible for the insufficient vaccination coverage of the general population for several infectious diseases. Major consequences can result from this reluctant attitude to vaccination, as witnessed by the 2008–2012 European measles epidemic (23,000 case-patients in France) [3]. French general practitioners (GPs), just like any other GPs working in a developed country, play a crucial role in the vaccination process as patients first come to them for medical issues. GPs are believed to deliver most vaccines [4]. They also have a significant influence on their patients' attitude to vaccination. The authors of several studies highlighted that the GPs' recommendation was a decisive factor in the patients' vaccination. They also revealed that GPs who were themselves vaccinated against a specific disease were more likely to recommend the vaccination to their patients [5]. However, patients consulting a vaccine-reluctant GP were more likely to adopt the same attitude [6]. Studying the GPs' opinions, attitudes, and behaviors related to vaccination is therefore important to determine the impact of this confidence crisis and to pinpoint any of their reluctant attitudes to vaccination.

The research unit 912 (Economic & Social Sciences, Health Systems & Medical Informatics [SESSTIM]) and the

Directorate for Research, Studies, Assessment and Statistics of Ministry of Health (DREES), in collaboration with the Regional Health Observatories (ORS) and the Regional Unions for Healthcare Professionals (URPS) – general practitioners from the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA), Pays de la Loire and Poitou-Charentes regions, set up a third national and regional panel of GPs for the 2014–2016 period. Two previous panels had already been set up: the "five regions panel" (panel 1) for the 2007–2009 period included 1900 GPs from five different regions; the national and regional "panel 2" for the 2009–2012 period included 2200 GPs. As far as infectious diseases are concerned, the results of the surveys conducted with these panels helped in studying the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of GPs related to the treatment of bacterial tonsillitis [7–9], vaccination as a whole [10,11], MMR vaccination (measles, mumps, and rubella) [12] and seasonal or pandemic influenza vaccination [13–16].

Our aim was to present the design of the third panel. We reported the results of the first wave of surveys which only focused on vaccination.

2. Panel 3

2.1. Themes of the five waves of surveys

The whole survey will last three years, starting from the inclusion phase (Wave 0). During that initial phase, we gathered general information on the GPs. Five waves of cross-sectional studies should be conducted, one every 6 months:

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