

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, INTENTIONS AND BARRIERS TOWARDS HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV) VACCINATION AMONG MEN AND WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST: A NATIONAL STUDY IN OMAN

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Background: Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) globally. Infection with HPV is the main risk factor for developing cervical cancer, which is one of the most common types of cancer among women worldwide. There are no public education and national immunization programmes in most Middle Eastern countries.

Methods: This cross-sectional study aimed to explore the public knowledge, attitudes, intentions and barriers towards HPV vaccination in Oman. Men and women were recruited from all regions (11 provinces) of Oman, using a convenience sampling approach. Participants were asked to complete an online validated self-administered questionnaire in Arabic.

Results: A total of 1403 participants (69.1% female; 30.9% male), including 369 healthcare providers, were recruited. Poor knowledge of HPV and its vaccine were observed. Only 22% of participants had heard about HPV infection, with women, healthcare providers and participants with higher education level having a significant positive association with awareness of HPV ($P = 0.001$). The majority of participants (71.5%) were worried about the vaccine's side effects and, 84.6% wanted reassurance that the vaccine will protect against HPV infection. However, 58% were willing to take the vaccine, with 77% believing that both genders should be vaccinated. Around 99% of the participants supported the need for public and school education programmes about HPV infection.

Conclusion: The findings of this study shows that there is a positive attitude towards the HPV vaccine and suggests the need for public education campaigns regarding the HPV. These data provide implications for future efforts to facilitate HPV education policy and support the initiation of a nationwide HPV immunization programme in Oman, and other Middle Eastern countries.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Acknowledgments

All authors contributed to finalizing the manuscript. The authors do not have any financial or nonfinancial competing interests for this review. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. Acknowledgement is given to Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), who supported this study. We also thank the Omani individuals who participated in this study.

Human subjects approval statement

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Committee of College of Nursing at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).