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### ABSTRACT

#### **Key Determinants of Influenza Vaccination Intake among Pregnant Women: a cross sectional study from Palestine**

*Ayat Rani Abu Qadom , Sujood Taha, Malak Tamimi, kahraman Najajrah, Sana Mallouh, Sawzan Salameh, Dala Daraghmeh.*

*Palestine, Al-Quds University, Faculty of Pharmacy.*

**Background:** Pregnant women and infants under six months are at higher risk of severe influenza-related health issues. Maternal influenza vaccine protects pregnant women and their newborns from serious problems caused by the influenza virus. The inactivated influenza vaccine is safe and effective during any trimester of pregnancy. However, despite the vaccine's safety and potential benefits, vaccination rates among pregnant women are still low. Understanding the factors that affect their decision-making is critical to designing targeted interventions to improve vaccination rates and enhance the overall well-being of mother and child.

**Objectives:** to examine the knowledge, practice, and attitudes of pregnant women toward influenza vaccination and the factors associated with vaccine uptake.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional online survey targeted pregnant women, utilizing various data collection methods such as clinic visits, social media interactions, QR codes, and paper questionnaires at medical centers. The questionnaire consisted of six sections: sociodemographic and clinical characteristics, knowledge about influenza and its vaccine during pregnancy, barriers to receiving the flu shot, sources of information, and complementary and alternative medicine use during pregnancy. The data was analyzed using descriptive and multivariate regression analyses to explore the connections between patient sociodemographic and clinical characteristics and vaccine acceptance.



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All analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27.0.

**Results:** Out of 209 pregnant women who were approached, 200 completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 95.7%. These women, aged between 18 and 50, had diverse educational backgrounds, with 74% holding a bachelor's degree. The majority of participants in either the second trimester (35.2%) or third trimester (36.2%) of pregnancy. Out of the total, 7 individuals (3.5%) have already been vaccinated, while 88 people (44%) are willing to accept the vaccine if it is provided free of charge. In terms of Sources of Information, 28% (56) of patients gathered information via social media, whereas 20.5% (41) were recommended to receive the vaccine by their Obstetrics and Gynaecology physicians. Among the participants, 44% (87) had no issues with receiving the vaccine, whereas 55.6% (109) declined it. In terms of barriers preventing pregnant women from getting the flu shot, studies indicated that 50.5% (99) of patients were hesitant about receiving an injection, and 52.6% (103) expressed concerns about potential unknown factors related to the flu shot. The analysis reveals that smoking and exercise have statistically significant association with influenza vaccine acceptance (p-value = 0.003, 0.005, respectively). There were no significant changes according to complementary and alternative medicine use (P-value=0.224).

**Conclusions:** The influenza vaccination rate among pregnant women in Palestine is suboptimal, with healthcare professionals rarely recommending it. Positive recommendations from healthcare professionals and convenient vaccine accessibility are likely to increase vaccination acceptance rates. By promoting cooperation between the public and private sectors, such as through subsidized or free vaccination initiatives, the efficacy and sustainability of maternal influenza vaccination endeavors could be enhanced.

**Keywords:** influenza, vaccination, pregnant, women, Palestine.