

Perceptions of Influenza Immunization Among York University Students

AP/ADMS 4491 Qualitative Research Methods

Context

In the 2012 Canadian Flu Season:

- A total of 20, 000 flu hospitalizations
- Only 28% of Canadians received the vaccine
- Of those, only 16% were between the ages of 20 and 34

Research Questions

1. Through what process do students become informed about seasonal influenza?
2. How do students perceive the risk of seasonal influenza?
3. How do students perceive the value of influenza vaccinations?
4. What factors influence students' decisions to get vaccinated?

Findings

Students feel influenza is only dangerous for the young and elderly:

“You can't bounce back from it... when you're older, but at this age you're down for a week and that's the scope of the illness.” - Brittany

Students' perceptions of the flu are shaped by friends and family:

“My biggest source of information would have to be my parents. My mom especially.”- Garry

Students believe that seeking immunization is not worth the effort:

“Honestly, its convenience. My doctor is downtown. Unless everyone is walking around sick I don't really bother myself.” - Adam

Some students believe that immunization is harmful to their health:

“[E]ven if [the flu shot] protects you from that one strain, it actually weakens your protection from other strains of the flu.” - Jeff

Conclusions

1. Students doubt the seriousness of influenza and the efficacy of the vaccine.
2. Students seek to conserve time and energy.
3. Students are heavily influenced by work, student organizations, and family.

Recommendations

- Educate students on the pathology of influenza and the value in vaccinations.
- Conduct immunization clinics in high traffic areas such as Vari Hall or Central Square.
- Target awareness media toward student organizations and parents.

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