Vaccination Response to an Ongoing Meningitis Outbreak: Uptake and Attitudes among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Los Angeles, CA

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Background. Men who have sex with men (MSM) are at high risk for invasive meningococcal disease (IMD). Following a 2016 IMD outbreak in Southern California, public health officials released a advisory that urged at-risk adults to get meningococcal vaccines. However, despite public health efforts to increase MCV4 coverage, uptake and acceptance among MSM remains unknown. Thus, our study sought to: (1) estimate reported MCV4 immunization among MSM in Los Angeles, CA; and (2) document the facilitators and barriers to the newest vaccination recommendation following the recent outbreak.

Methods. From November 2016 through February 2017, we used venue-based sampling to recruit MSM in Los Angeles (N = 513). Eligible participants completed a 30-minute iPAD survey that included items on MCV4 status, sexual behavior, vaccination knowledge and behaviors among other factors. Chi-square and independent sample t-tests were used to determine bivariate associations. Statistically significant variables from bivariate analyses were included in a multivariate logistic regression model predicting MCV4 uptake.

Results. Participants were young (M=33, SD=10) and racially/ethnically diverse: White (35.7%), Black/African American (14.6%), Hispanic (36.5%), Asian/Pacific Islander (4.1%), Other (9.2%). Reported MCV4 immunization among MSM (25.4%) and MSM living with HIV (37.7%) was low. Statistically significant correlates of MCV4 uptake among men 18–49 years of age included: knowing someone who had received the MCV4 vaccine (aOR=2.21), believing MCV4 vaccination was important (aOR=3.45), having confidence in the MCV4 vaccine (aOR=5.43), and knowing someone who had received the vaccination (aOR=5.79).

Conclusion. MSM's perceived health risk, vaccine confidence, and knowledge of someone who received the MCV4 vaccine were important indicators of meningitis immunization in this outbreak context. Provider and public health education efforts may be enhanced by messages that emphasize personal health risks, the safety and efficacy of MCV4, and the importance of meningococcal vaccines for men's health. Popular opinion leader programs facilitated by someone who had been vaccinated are warranted to enhance MCV4 uptake.

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