

ESNO POSITION STATEMENT ON VACCINATION

Brussels, 04-09-2018

‘Nurses as stable factor in Vaccination uptake’

Public misunderstanding of vaccines is a concern to all those working in health care across each of the disciplines and ranks. Over the past few years, we have seen a serious decrease of vaccination uptake, increasing the risk of new outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. For example, the number of measles infections tripled to over 14,000 cases across Europe in 2017 compared to 2016¹. For the cases with known vaccination status, 87% of cases were unvaccinated whilst only 3% were vaccinated with two or more doses. A public trust campaign on vaccinations has been insufficient in communicating the benefits of vaccines and increasing the uptake of vaccinations in Europe. In parallel, we have seen an increase in the distribution of misinformation and misconceptions on vaccination which has added to the decrease in immunisation uptake.

The European Specialist Nurses Organisations (ESNO) has witnessed a significant increase in the outbreaks of vaccine-preventable infectious diseases. These outbreaks have resulted in the deaths of people young and old, including healthy young people. Nurses have directly observed the consequences of reduced vaccination uptake. Not only has this led to great loss of human life, it has also had a paralysing effect on the healthcare systems. We have seen a particularly strong impact on diseases such as influenza, rubella and measles, for example.

This has prompted ESNO to take a position on this issue by promoting vaccination with an emphasis on factual information and education. Far too many misconceptions and misleading information is circulating, even among healthcare professionals, including nurses. The consequences can be huge: we have seen complete hospital wards shut down and operations postponed due to preventable influenza outbreaks, as well as productivity losses due to lost working days which has a knock-on impact on wider society.

Nurses, as frontline health professionals, provide information to hesitant populations, helping to explain common misconceptions regarding immunisation². ESNO calls on national health regulators to support nurses to initiate educational activities at the ward level. In addition, ESNO advises national health regulators to invest more funds in promoting seasonal influenza vaccination. In parallel, national health regulators should provide a structured long term scheme to address this issue for as long as is necessary to increase trust and vaccination uptake.

To ensure that nurses and other healthcare workers are engaged in addressing vaccination, training and educational resources on infections and vaccination need to be made available. ESNO therefore promotes the creation of tailored resources on vaccination, specifically designed for nurses. Throughout Europe, undergraduate training should place a greater emphasis on vaccination and how nurses can contribute to address it. Furthermore, ESNO supports the integration of vaccination courses into the continued professional education of nurses, particularly accredited courses. Accordingly, ESNO is currently working on the production of an Information and Communication Guide on Vaccination and AMR to ensure that nurses across Europe can access accurate, consistent information on infections and vaccines. It is our belief that if all nurses throughout Europe were to receive extensive training infection control and vaccination, a huge difference could be made.

¹ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control Measles and Rubella Monitoring Report for 2017

² http://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/351927/WHO-Vaccine-Manual.pdf

The European Specialist Nurses Organisations (ESNO) is a non-profit organisation and the goal is to facilitate and provide an effective framework for communication and co-operation between the European Specialist Nurses Organisations and its constituent members. ESNO represents the mutual interests and benefits of these organisations to the wider European community in the interest of the public health. Members of ESNO consist of individual European specialist nurses organizations.