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The evaluation of the on-time immunisation rates of students entering public schools in the City of Johannesburg, Regions B and E



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ABSTRACT

Due to the rise in prevalence of vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) in South Africa, the primary objective of this study is to determine the incidence of on-time immunisation rates among grades 1 to 3 children (ages 6 to 9) entering public schools in Region B and E of the City of Johannesburg, and to further determine the factors that affect caregiver willingness to vaccinate as a secondary objective. School-based immunisation surveys are a common tool used to establish the vaccination coverage among children. A quantitative cross-sectional study design was used to establish the knowledge, attitude and perceptions of caregivers and administrators of students in grades 1 to 3 at three public sector schools within the City of Johannesburg, district of Gauteng. For the purpose of this study a caregiver can be defined as any person whom the student has been placed in the care of. This can be further categorised as a father, mother, aunt, uncle or grandparent. The on-time immunisation rates among children in grades 1 to 3 attending these public schools were analysed by reviewing the immunisation records of the students from the respective schools. The data needed for the study was collected, using REDCap, by means of a pre-validated questionnaire.

One of the major findings concluded in this study is that around 16.44% of children are not fully immunised despite government efforts to achieve 100% coverage through the Expanded Program on Immunisation - South Africa (EPI-SA), which is implemented in most public schools. This study discovered that there are varying percentages of children who get enrolled for their first grade before they have completed their immunisation schedules (13% to 25%). These results confirm findings made by other researchers, which point to the fact that the immunisation coverage of VPDs takes a downward trajectory as children grow, signifying underlying factors that go beyond just caregiver knowledge. The study also concluded that around 19% of parents and caregivers who participated in the survey admitted that they had decided against getting their

children immunised for reasons other than illness. This points to other reasons that are at play, which influence caregivers and parents in making decisions regarding the immunisation of their children. This supports the assertion made by the World Health Organization (WHO) that there are socio-economic determinants like a family's income level and the educational status of the mother, which are associated with inequities in vaccination coverage as well.