**Influenza and pertussis vaccination in pregnancy: Portrayal in online media articles and perceptions of pregnant women and healthcare professionals**

Christopher R Wilcox1,Kathryn Bottrell2,Pauline Paterson3,William S Schulz3, Tushna Vandrevalad4, Heidi J Larson3, Christine E Jones2,5

1NIHR Clinical Research Facility, University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, Southampton, UK

2Paediatric Infectious Diseases Research Group, St George's, University of London, UK

3Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK

4Department of Psychology, Kingston University, London, UK

5Faculty of Medicine and Institute for Life Sciences, University of Southampton and University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, Southampton, UK

**Abstract**

**Introduction**

Online media may influence women’s decision to undergo [vaccination](https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/vaccination) during pregnancy**.** The aims of this mixed-methods study were to: (1) examine the portrayal of maternal vaccination in online media and (2) establish the perceived target of vaccine protection as viewed by pregnant women and maternity healthcare professionals (HCPs).

**Methods**

Online media articles on maternal vaccination (published July-December 2012 or November 2015-April 2016) were identified through the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine’s Vaccine Confidence Database and thematically analysed. Questionnaires for pregnant women and HCPs were distributed within four English hospitals (July 2017-January 2018).

**Results**

Of 203 articles identified, 60% related to [pertussis](https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/pertussis) vaccination, 33% to [influenza](https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/influenza) and 6% both. The majority positively portrayed vaccination in pregnancy (97%), but inaccurate, negative articles persist which criticize pertussis vaccination’s safety and efficacy. Positively-worded articles about pertussis tended to focus on infant protection and highlight examples of recent cases, whereas positively-worded articles about influenza focused on maternal protection. These themes were reflected in questionnaire responses from 314 pregnant women and 204 HCPs, who perceived pertussis vaccination as protecting the baby, and influenza vaccination as protecting the mother, or mother and baby equally. A minority of the pregnant women surveyed intended to decline influenza (22%) or pertussis (8%) vaccination.

**Conclusions**

The majority of online articles support pertussis and influenza vaccination during pregnancy. The portrayal of pertussis vaccination as primarily benefiting the child, using real-examples, may influence its higher uptake compared with influenza. This approach should be considered by HCPs when recommending vaccination. HCPs should be prepared to provide advice to women hesitant about vaccination, including addressing any negative media, and consider educational strategies to counteract inaccurate information. Future studies should directly assess the influence of media on vaccine decision-making and establish which media platforms are typically used by pregnant women to gather information.

**Keywords**

Vaccination

Pregnancy

Maternal

Media

Confidence

Decision-making