ANALYSIS OF VACCINATION COVERAGE AGAINST COVID-19 AND ADHERENCE AMONG OLDER ADULTS ANÁPOLIS, GOIÁS

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ABSTRACT
Vaccination is an effective and cost-effective policy for preventing and controlling infectious diseases. In Brazil, vaccination coverage continues to grow, despite the challenges of an emerging country. However, several factors, such as poor adherence to campaigns, prevent such programs from being as effective as they should be. In this sense, it is necessary to help identify the barriers and challenges that prevent optimal adherence to vaccination. Given this, the present study aims to analyze COVID-19 vaccination coverage and adherence among adolescents in the municipality of Anápolis, Goiás. This is a cross-sectional, descriptive, and quantitative study developed using a semi-structured questionnaire that assessed vaccination coverage, adherence, and knowledge of the COVID-19 vaccine. Fifty adolescents were surveyed, of whom the majority were women (73.5%) aged between 12 and 17 years. Regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, 81.6% knew its function, but most did not know how it was made. Adherence to the first and second doses was high (87.8% and 79.6%), but only 41.7% completed the vaccination schedule with booster doses. Thus, the study showed high initial adherence to COVID-19 vaccination among adolescents in Anápolis, Goiás, with confidence in the vaccine's efficacy and safety. However, there was low adherence to booster doses, highlighting challenges such as fear of adverse effects and belief that it is not necessary.

Keywords: COVID-19 infections; Vaccination coverage; Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

The National Immunization Program (PNI) is a government initiative to help protect the population through vaccination. It began in 1973 and is coordinated by the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with state and municipal health departments. The PNI ensures that all target groups, in all parts of the country, have access to all vaccines necessary to protect against more than 20 diseases. It is also organized into an integrated and hierarchical network to ensure that the program is implemented correctly in all areas (DOMINGUES *et al,* 2020; BRAZIL, 2023).

Vaccination is one of the most effective and cost-effective health policies for the control and prevention of infectious diseases, through which there is already a proven reduction in mortality and the perpetuation of diseases being preventable nowadays.

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Immunization is thus largely responsible for the eradication of several diseases with epidemic and pandemic potential (GUIMARÃES *et* al, 2021; LOPES JUNIOR *et al*, 2021).

In this context, when analyzing population adherence to the COVID-19 vaccine among adolescents in Brazil, it was possible to see positive results, especially due to the prioritization of this age group in the PNI, as mentioned above. According to data from the Ministry of Health, vaccination of adolescents began in January 2021, focusing on protecting this group considered to be at high risk for serious complications from the disease. Adherence was initially high, driven by awareness of the severity of the virus and the effectiveness of vaccines. In many states, more than 90% of adolescents received at least the first dose. Factors such as fear of the disease, experience with previous vaccination campaigns, and the availability of the vaccine at local health centers contributed to the success of this adherence (BENEDETTI *et al,* 2022; BRAZIL, 2023).

However, challenges have been observed, such as vaccine hesitancy among some individuals, related to the spread of misinformation about possible adverse effects and doubts about vaccine safety. According to a survey published by Fiocruz, vaccine confidence changed over time, being lower among groups exposed to fake news and conflicting information. In addition, unequal access to healthcare in remote areas of Brazil also limited equitable vaccination coverage in some regions. Nevertheless, educational campaigns and expanded access to vaccination services have helped to minimize these impacts and ensure high vaccination coverage among adolescents (DAHER *et al,* 2022; BRAZIL, 2023). Thus, the present study aims to analyze COVID-19 vaccination coverage among adolescents aged 12 to 17 years in Anápolis, Goiás.

METHOD

This is a cross-sectional, descriptive, and quantitative study developed using a semi-structured questionnaire, answered via Google Forms, which assessed vaccination coverage, adherence, and knowledge of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The study was conducted at the Central University Outpatient Clinic and the Children's and Adolescents' Outpatient Clinic. In addition, an informational booklet on syphilis was made available to all participants. A sample calculation was made, considering the population data from the 2010 Census of the municipality of Anápolis estimating a sample size of 50 adolescents surveyed. A total of 50 questionnaires were analyzed.

The data obtained were tabulated and quantified using descriptive statistics, using simple frequency and percentages. This research followed all the rules set by Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council and was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of UniEVANGÉLICA, with an approval opinion (CAAE: 79675624.1.0000.5076).

RESULTS

When analyzing the sociodemographic profile of the researched population, it can be observed that the majority are women (73.5%), with 53.0% in the 13-14 age group. In terms of education, 71.4% are in elementary school and 28.6% in high school. In terms of occupation, 42.9% are unemployed, and the majority earn the minimum wage.

Regarding participants' knowledge about the COVID-19 vaccine, 81.6% said they knew the vaccine's function. However, 51.0% said they did not know how the vaccine is made, and 53.1% knew how it works in the body. Regarding confidence in safety and efficacy, 83.7% believed that the vaccine offered is safe, and 83.3% believed in its efficacy.

When analyzing the vaccination of these adolescents, it was possible to observe that the majority had received the first and second doses, with a percentage of 87.8% and 79.6%, respectively. However, a minority have a complete vaccination schedule, with only 41.7% vaccinated with the initially recommended booster doses, totaling four doses, of which the majority are women, with a percentage of 85.7%. In addition, 51.1% remembered the laboratory where the vaccines were taken.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study showed significant adherence to COVID-19 vaccination among adolescents aged 12 to 17 years in Anápolis-GO, especially in the first doses of the vaccination schedule. Most participants demonstrated basic knowledge about the function of the vaccine and general confidence in its safety and efficacy, which contributed to a high initial vaccination rate. However, adherence to booster doses was substantially lower, which may pose a challenge for maintaining adequate immunization in the long term.

Factors such as fear of adverse effects and the perception that the vaccine is unnecessary were identified as barriers to vaccination, suggesting the need for more effective communication and incentive strategies. Educational campaigns that combat misinformation and promote a deeper understanding of the importance of booster doses

are essential to ensure continued protection among adolescents. Strengthening public policies, in line with the joint work of health professionals and managers, will be fundamental to overcoming these challenges and increasing vaccination coverage, ensuring greater protection of the elderly population against COVID-19.

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