

Media coverage of health information and attitudes towards HPV vaccination

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Abstract

Mass media can play an important role in disseminating health information and shaping attitudes and intentions towards preventive health behaviour. This paper examines how media coverage of the HPV vaccine affects attitudes towards vaccination in general and the HPV vaccine specifically among adults in France. We use data from six waves of the French Health Barometer survey, collected between 2010 and 2020, and information on media coverage of the HPV vaccine extracted from the database of the French National Audiovisual Institute. We find that exposure to recent media coverage has a negative impact on attitudes towards the HPV vaccine, and this effect is concentrated among mothers of daughters in the eligible age range for vaccination. We show that these negative effects are driven by the debate around vaccine safety and alleged side effects that arose following lawsuits brought against the vaccine manufacturer in 2013.

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