

AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE, AND ATTITUDES OF HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS INFECTION AND VACCINATION AMONG STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

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Background: Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection is the most common sexually transmitted infection, with Serbia experiencing a concerning high incidence and mortality rate of cervical cancer caused by HPV. Therefore, it is crucial to implement effective public health strategies that should prioritize education and motivation for young people to utilize the available prevention methods.

Methods and Objectives: This study aimed to investigate the level of knowledge and awareness among Serbian university students regarding HPV infections, HPV-related diseases, and the HPV vaccine. We conducted a cross-sectional analysis of 344 students from various faculties at the University of Belgrade during the European Cervical Cancer Prevention Week, 2024. Multivariate regression was used to identify factors predicting higher HPV knowledge, including gender, place of birth, relationship status, faculty type, and HPV vaccine awareness.

Results: The average total knowledge score of students was 5.60. Female students, those studying in the Faculty of Health Sciences, and single students have significantly higher knowledge about HPV. Among those who had heard about the HPV vaccine, 38.5% believe that it should be administered to both girls and boys before they become sexually active. Most students (79.5%) believe they should consult their healthcare provider before getting the vaccine, and an even higher percentage (92.3%) feel that the state should fully fund the vaccine.

Conclusion: Our research indicates that university students have a low level of knowledge about HPV infection, related diseases (such as cervical cancer), and vaccines. Differences in knowledge are observed by gender, faculty type, and relationship status. These findings highlight the need for targeted promotional and educational activities tailored to address the specific knowledge gaps identified within different student subgroups.

Keywords: Knowledge, Awareness, Attitude, Human papillomavirus, Students