



Perceptions of herpes zoster and attitudes towards zoster vaccination among 50-65-year-old Danes.

<https://arctichealth.org/en/permalink/ahliterature129104>

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Source: Dan Med Bull. 2011 Dec;58(12):A4345
Date: Dec-2011
Language: English
Publication Type: Article
Keywords: Adaptation, Psychological
Age Factors
Aged
Denmark - epidemiology
Female
Focus Groups
Health Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice
Herpes Zoster - epidemiology - prevention & control - psychology
Herpes Zoster Vaccine
Humans
Male
Middle Aged
Models, Psychological
Perception
Prevalence
Qualitative Research
Quality of Life - psychology
Stress, Psychological

Abstract:

Herpes zoster (HZ or shingles) and its complication post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN) are common in persons above 50 years of age. A vaccine that decreases the incidence and morbidity associated with HZ was licensed for use in 2006 and will be marketed in Denmark as from 2013. This study aimed to explore the relations between illness perceptions of shingles and attitudes towards zoster vaccination.

Three qualitative focus group interviews were conducted with 22 patients, relatives and individuals with no personal experiences with HZ. Semi-structured interview guides were applied including questions identified in a literature study. The data were analysed using a medical anthropological approach.

The study showed that HZ and PHN, in particular, have severe impacts on patients' quality of life (QoL) and often affect their relatives' daily lives as well. Nevertheless, people who have no experience with HZ underrate both its prevalence and its QoL impacts. Such misperceptions often result in delayed treatment and may lead to a low uptake of zoster vaccination.

Individual attitudes towards zoster vaccination are closely related to subjective perceptions of HZ and views on vaccination in general. Vaccination recommendations to target groups are necessary, but individual choice is determined by knowledge about the disease, personal risk assessment and the recommendations of the general practitioner.

The study was funded by a research grant from Sanofi Pasteur MSD.

not relevant.

PubMed ID:

22142574 [View in PubMed](#) 