

News from

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UNFOUNDED FEARS SPARK CONCERNS FOR POTENTIAL MMR EPIDEMIC

Parents can turn to community pharmacists for the facts

Research launched at the British Pharmaceutical Conference (BPC) in Manchester shows only **63%** of UK parents vaccinate their children against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), sparking concerns about the potential for an epidemic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) warns that if immunisation coverage against MMR is less than 95%, measles could become an epidemic¹.

Brighton School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences Pharmacists found that UK parents had concerns about the safety of the MMR vaccine, considered their children to be 'delicate' and preferred a single vaccine.

Angela MacAdam and Paul Gard led the research. Angela MacAdam said: "It is worrying that the vaccination rate is this low. We believe that the problem stems from a basic distrust in the Government's health advice.

"This sample of parents shows us that work must be done to convince parents they should immunise their children against MMR in order to meet the WHO's recommended coverage of 95% and ensure the incidence of these diseases doesn't spiral into an epidemic.

"There is a lot of conflicting information in the media and on the internet about MMR and this makes it challenging for parents to make a decision. They can have confidence in their local pharmacist's knowledge of medicines and turn to them for expert advice and information.

"Community pharmacists are ideally placed to help parents – they are easy to access in the places that people work, shop and live, and you don't need an appointment to talk to one."

Knowledge of parents' beliefs will enable pharmacists to have a more informed role in pharmacy public health issues, vaccination debates and in managing future health promotion campaigns around MMR.

Ends

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Notes to Editors

The British Pharmaceutical Conference - entitled "[The medicines maze: balancing risks and benefits](#)" - takes place from 10th to 12th September, 2007, at Manchester Central (formerly Manchester International Convention Centre). The theme of BPC 2007 is reflected throughout the programme, with keynote speeches and workshops addressing crucial technical and professional issues that are facing pharmacy today. The conference will showcase the latest developments in pharmaceutical science and practice research and include discussion and debate led by expert speakers.

References

1. Report from World Health Organization Fact Sheet EURO/07/05 Why immunisation must remain a priority in the WHO European Region.