

Knowledge and Practice among the Population of Saudi Arabia Eastern Province during the H1N1 Pandemic 2009

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Background: It is well-known that public compliance with health directives is a prerequisite for an effective pandemic management and that individual beliefs, perceptions and knowledge are important factors in determining this compliance.

Objective: To evaluate the level of people's knowledge and practice towards Influenza A (H1N1pandemic).

Design: A descriptive cross-sectional study.

Setting: Five commercial malls, Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia.

Method: Self-administered questionnaires which were distributed among 550 adults attending specific commercial malls in Eastern Province from 27th of June to 11th of July 2009.

Result: A total of 550 adults participated in this study. Five-hundred twenty-seven (95.8%) participants were Saudi and 286 (52%) were males.

Five-hundred forty-seven (99.5%) participants heard about "swine flu". Five-hundred thirty-eight (97.8%) knew that this disease is transmissible to humans. Four-hundred eighty-six (88.4%) thought that the disease can be prevented. Three-hundred nine (56.2%) participants stated that there is a vaccine against the disease.

Two-hundred thirty-six (42.9%) stated that they were washing their hands and the same figure stated that they were avoiding people with seasonal influenza symptoms. Moreover, only ninety (16.4%) stopped kissing and hugging friends and relatives and 68 (12.4%) stopped shaking hands.

Conclusion: Although the knowledge of the people in Eastern Province in KSA about Influenza A (H1N1) was good, poor compliance with the government recommended preventive measures was noted. This study proved that there is a need for more efforts to encourage the public to undertake specific behaviours related to preventive measures of infectious diseases outbreaks.