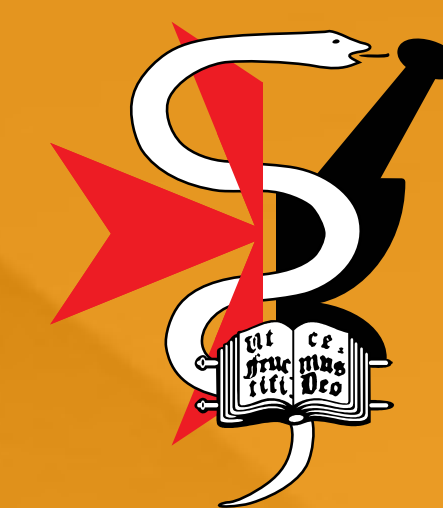


Attitude and Knowledge of Parents on Vaccination

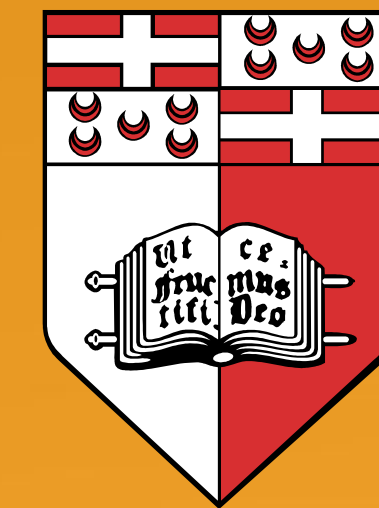
Maria Galea, Lilian M. Azzopardi, Anthony Serracino Inglott

Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

email: mariagalea266@gmail.com



Department of Pharmacy



University of Malta

INTRODUCTION

Despite vaccinations being a breakthrough in preventive care, parents' decisions on vaccination programmes may be difficult. Study of parent's attitudes and knowledge on the subject is important to identify the needs and issues parents have on the matter, especially the discrepancy between the perceived and actual knowledge of parents and the main reasons for missing vaccinations.

AIMS

- To assess attitudes, knowledge and perception of Maltese parents on vaccines, vaccine preventable illnesses and vaccination cost.
- To develop an information resource which addresses the identified needs of parents and provides them with a medically sound information resource to help them make an informed decision.

METHOD

Phase 1

A questionnaire which aimed to assess parent's attitudes, knowledge and perception on childhood vaccinations, vaccine preventable illnesses and vaccination cost was designed.

The questionnaire was validated by a validation panel consisting of two pharmacists, two doctors and two other members who are not in the medical field.

Phase 2

Fieldwork took place with parents being recruited to fill

in the questionnaire from pharmacies, clinics and other places with a high parent attendance.

Phase 3

A medically sound, informative website (www.tilqim.info) was developed to meet the needs identified through the questionnaires. The website contains information about vaccine preventable illnesses, their symptoms, transmission, severity and protection available. It also contains information on the importance of vaccination and a schematic representation of the vaccination schedule including vaccines provided for free through the NHS and those available solely in the private market.

RESULTS

- The questionnaire was completed by 270 Maltese parents
- 81.2% have looked up information when deciding on their children's vaccination programmes. The three main sources of information were the paediatrician (35.2%), the family doctor (20.9%) and the internet (19.8%).
- 68% of responding parents stated that they feel familiar or highly familiar with recommended vaccination schedules however when presented with a list of non-obligatory vaccines a high number of missed vaccines were identified. The main reason selected by parents for not giving a particular vaccine was not knowing that the vaccine exists (Table 1).

Reason for not vaccinating	Number of parents who selected this option
I do not feel my child is at risk of being infected with such a disease	80
The disease is not serious enough so as to justify vaccination	10
I am not aware that this vaccine exists	145
The vaccine is too expensive	15
I am concerned about safety and side effects of this vaccine	86
I heard the vaccine can have harmful effects	30
I do not believe in vaccines	12
I forgot	5
I want to give my children the least possible number of vaccines	19
I feel that there are too many vaccinations required	16
I feel that vaccines other than those given for free by the government are not necessary	20

Table 1: Reason for not giving a particular vaccination (n=270)

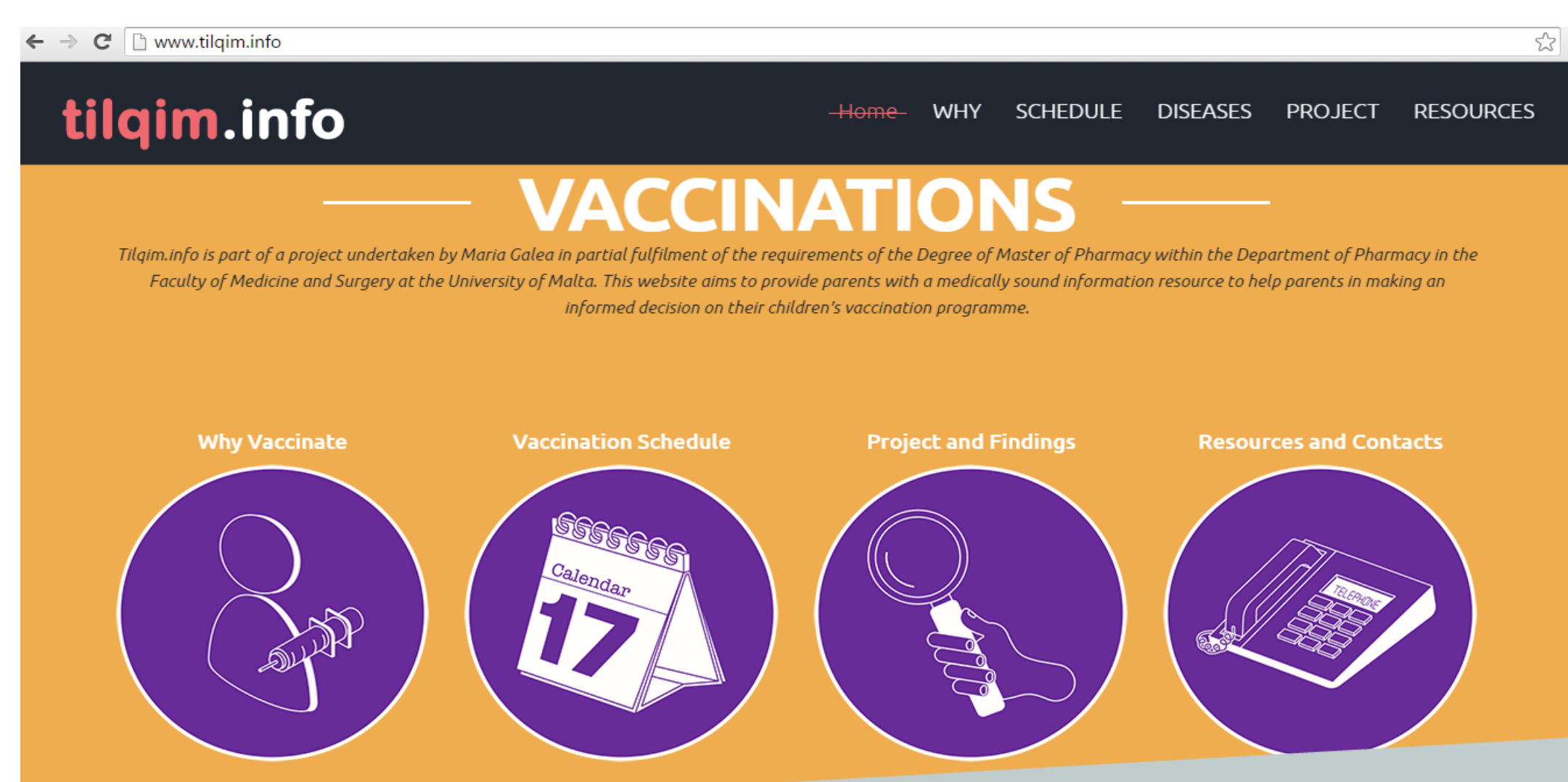


Figure 1: The homepage of developed website www.tilqim.info

CONCLUSION

The study found that lack of awareness on the availability of vaccines and lack of knowledge on preventable illnesses are important reasons for missed non-compulsory vaccinations. Being one of the most accessible healthcare professionals the pharmacist is in an ideal position to support parents in making informed decisions. The developed website www.tilqim.info can serve as an ideal tool to be used by pharmacists and healthcare professionals to support patients in decisions regarding vaccination.