

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION ON ADULT INFLUENZA VACCINATION



Campaign Overview: Germany

Authors

Ms. Yifan Zheng

Dr. Jane Barratt



Contents

Executive Summary	1
Demographic Details	2
Context	2
Government Campaign	2
Non-government Organizations	5
German National Association of Senior Citizens	5
German Respiratory Society	5
Status of Influenza Vaccination Campaign	6
References	7

Authors
Ms. Yifan Zheng
Dr. Jane Barratt

Design
Ms. Chesley Ryder

Reviewer
Ms. Anna Sangster



Executive Summary

Germany has adopted a risk-based influenza vaccination policy to recommend influenza vaccination in most at-risk groups including citizens over the age of 60 years, pregnant women, healthcare workers and people with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma or cardiovascular disease.

To increase the seasonal influenza vaccination coverage in all at-risk groups identified, there is an annual national influenza awareness campaign under the leadership of the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) in collaboration with multiple public health authorities. Messages and campaign materials are delivered via web information, fact sheets, posters, brochures and press releases. Online information targets the general public with the purpose of educating the influenza and vaccination facts. However tailored messages addressing the specific demands of these groups largely disseminated through offline channels including brochures and posters and remain relatively inadequate.

Beyond government actions, there are very few voices in civil society calling for an increased awareness and informed actions on influenza vaccination. Only two organizations have created messages to help improve understanding of influenza and their communication is restricted to a single channel (either brochure or press release).

Demographic Details

Germany, in 2018, had an estimated population of 82.9 million with some 13.6% between 0-14 years of age and 21.5% aged 65 years and over.¹ By 2050, approximately 23 million people in Germany will be aged 65 years or over, representing 30% of the total population. The proportion of those aged 80 years and over are projected to dramatically increase from 6.6% in 2018 to 13% (9.8 million) by 2050.²

As the German population ages the increasing prevalence of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) continues to pose a growing burden on the health of Germany. Each year, an estimated 91% of total deaths are attributed to NCDs. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the highest-ranking cause, accounting for 40.7% of NCD deaths, followed by cancer (28.6%), other NCDs (20.9%), respiratory diseases (6.6%) and diabetes (3.3%).³

Context

Alongside individuals with chronic disease, older Germans are at-risk for serious consequences of influenza such as hospitalization and death. During the 2018-19 flu season, almost 40,000 people were hospitalized and 852 patients died due to influenza. Eighty-six percent of those deceased were 60 years of age and over.⁴

Although annual influenza vaccination is recommended by the German Standing Committee on Vaccinations (STIKO) only 34.8% of older people aged 65 years and over were vaccinated which is far below the WHO target of 75%.⁵ A lack of awareness and information are known barriers to adult influenza vaccination, and many Germans either underestimate or are unaware of the serious and potentially life-threatening impact of the disease.⁶

In Germany, multiple authorities within the Ministry of Health are concerned with vaccination issues.⁷ The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) leads the identification, surveillance and prevention of vaccine preventable diseases.⁸ The RKI is advised by the German Standing Committee on Vaccinations (Ständige Impfkommision (STIKO) which forms national recommendations based on evidence-based research, and then publishes annual

vaccination schedules and guidelines.⁹ The Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), the primary authority in the field of health promotion on the national level, takes direct measures to inform the public about risks of vaccine preventable diseases (VPD) and the importance of vaccination.⁷

Since 2006, the BZgA and RKI have implemented a joint annual campaign, under the theme “We Go Ahead of Flu”, as a strategy to increase the seasonal influenza vaccination coverage in all at-risk groups identified by the STIKO. These include adults aged 60 years and over, patients with chronic illness of all ages, pregnant women and medical personnel.¹⁰

While governmental actions to promote vaccination are consistence through a systematic education and awareness campaign civil society (patient an advocacy associations) takes a significantly lesser role in promoting the awareness among the public. To our knowledge although the environmental scan was not exhaustive the few organizations such as the *German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations* (BAGSO) and the German Respiratory Society have included adult influenza vaccination on their agenda.

Government Campaign

National Immunization Schedule

The national immunization recommendations and schedule issued by STIKO are published annually by RKI and form the basis for guidance to federal states on the use of licensed vaccines.¹¹ Although federal states within Germany have the ability to modify vaccination schedules to meet the needs of their region, STIKO recommendations and schedule are official directives.¹² Since 2007, health insurance funds are obliged by law to cover costs for vaccinations recommended by STIKO and approved by the Federal Joint Committee.¹³

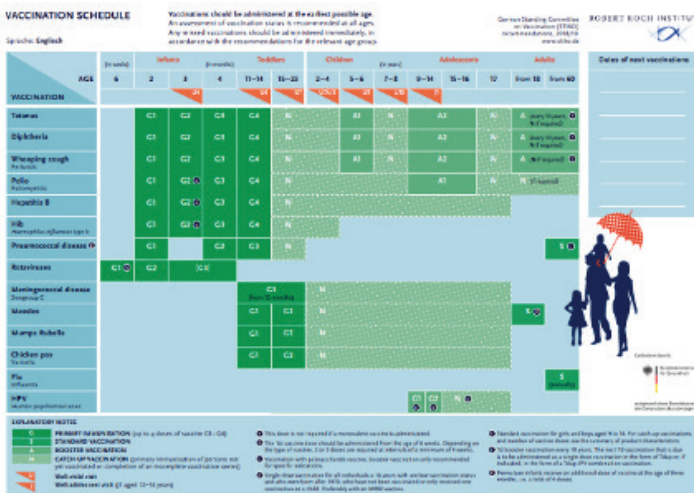
Influenza vaccination is recommended for citizens over the age of 60 years, and those with underlying conditions such as diabetes, asthma or cardiovascular disease as well as health care workers and pregnant women.¹¹

The STIKO immunisation schedule is available in 20 different languages and regarded as a major source

of reliable information on publicly funded vaccines for consumers and health care providers.¹⁴

According to the current STIKO schedule, an annual influenza vaccine is recommended and free of charge for people aged 60 years and over.

Figure 1: National vaccination schedule



Fact sheets

RKI and BZgA produce information sheets about influenza and vaccination with that from the RKI being available in 20 languages.^{21,22} Information is about influenza pathogens, symptoms and at-risk groups, vaccine production and components, side effects, post-immunization physical reactions and care. Although this fact sheet is intended for the general population, it mentions that older people and those with a chronic underlying disease are at-risk and a priority for vaccination.

As part of the “We Go Ahead of Flu” campaign, a fact sheet was developed by BZgA in partnership with RKI to describe the safety and efficacy of influenza vaccine with a note that enhanced influenza vaccines offers greater protection to older adults.²³

Figure 2: Fact sheet



Impfaktionen gegen Influenza in der Kranken- und Altenpflege

Impfung gegen Influenza: Viele Vorteile – zu selten genutzt

Die Impfung des Personals in medizinischen und pflegerischen Einrichtungen bringt viele Vorteile: Mitarbeitende werden vor Ansteckung geschützt und infizieren keine zu betreuenden Personen. Zudem verringert die Impfung krankheitsbedingte Fehltag.

Trotzdem lassen sich viele Mitarbeitende nicht impfen. Geringe Risikowahrnehmung, Sorge vor Nebenwirkungen, Zweifel an der Wirksamkeit oder zeitliche und organisatorische Hürden sind häufige Gründe. Gezielte Aufklärung und Aktionen können die Impfquote steigern.

Strategien

Medien- und Methodenmix

Die Impfquote lässt sich erfahrungsgemäß am besten mit einem Methodenmix steigern. Einige Maßnahmen können bei allen Mitarbeitenden zur Anwendung kommen. Dazu gehören der Aufruf und Erinnerungen zur Teilnahme an der Influenzaimpfung sowie aufmerksamkeitsstarke Impfaktionen.

Zielgruppenspezifisch sollten dagegen Aufklärungsmaßnahmen sein, die gezielt auf Vorbehalte oder mangelndes Wissen Bezug nehmen. So zweifelt die Ärzteschaft häufiger an der Wirksamkeit der Impfung, das Pflegepersonal befürchtet eher Unverträglichkeiten und Nebenwirkungen.

Ideenreich und anhaltend informieren

Je nach Alter oder kultureller Zugehörigkeit bevorzugen Mitarbeitende unterschiedliche Informationskanäle. Um möglichst viele zu erreichen, sollten Informationen über verschiedene Medien verbreitet werden: Dazu gehören die persönliche Ansprache im Rahmen der betriebsärztlichen Sprechstunde oder Impfaberater ebenso wie Internet und Intranet, Emails, Informations- und Aufklärungsfilm, Plakate, Handzettel und Infopost.

Meinungsbildner innerhalb der Ärzteschaft und des pflegerischen Personals können als wichtige Impfunterstützer fungieren und als zusätzliches Sprachrohr eingesetzt werden.

Kreative Aktionen wecken die Aufmerksamkeit

Um den größten Erfolg bei Impfaktionen zu erzielen, ist es wichtig, eine passende Aktion anzubieten. Schwerpunktsetzung und Gestaltung der Impfkampagne sollten auf die Voraussetzungen in der jeweiligen Einrichtung abgestimmt sein.

Umfassender Patientenschutz, der Anspruch ein gesundheitsförderndes Krankenhaus zu sein, Infektionsschutz von Angehörigen, aber auch der Ansporn durch Wettbewerbe oder eigenes Benchmarking im Haus können Aufmerksamkeit wecken und für Impfmotivation sorgen. Je nach Budget können auch attraktive Incentives wie Gutscheine die Aufmerksamkeit für die Influenzaimpfung erhöhen.

Tipps für Impfaktionen

Informationen gezielt verbreiten

Aushänge an zentralen Orten im Krankenhaus sorgen für Präsenz des Themas. Für Plakate bieten sich die Pforte, Kantine, Stationen, Funktionsbereiche, Parkhäuser/Parkplätze oder zentrale Infotafeln an. Parallel versendete E-Mails an die Angestellten oder Handzettel über die Hauspost verstärken die Themenpräsenz.

Aufsuchendes Impfen

Bewährt hat sich ein mobiles Impfteam: Vor der Kantine oder auf den Stationen und in den verschiedenen Funktionsbereichen wird zu vorher angekündigten Terminen Impfen vor Ort angeboten. Häufig kann hierfür ein Stationszimmer zur Verfügung gestellt werden. In offenen Bereichen hilft die Aufstellung eines Paravents. Auch Impfungen vor regelmäßigen Arzt- oder Pflegedienstbesprechungen erhöhen die Inanspruchnahme bei zeitlich belastetem Personal. Besonders günstig bei aufsuchendem Impfen sind Schichtwechsel, da dann besonders viele Mitarbeitende angetroffen werden.

Erweiterte Sprechzeiten

Vor der Influenzassaison bieten sich durchgängige oder zumindest sehr umfangreiche Impfzeiten beim Betriebsärztlichen Dienst an. In einigen Fällen kooperieren Einrichtungen mit Gesundheitsämtern oder niedergelassenen Ärztinnen bzw. Ärzten, um bei Impfwochen schnell und ohne Wartezeiten impfen zu können.

Web page

The Federal Ministry of Health, RKI and BZgA websites all contain influenza-related information to educate Germans about influenza and vaccination facts.

The Federal Ministry of Health describes on the website *what is influenza, how to reduce the risk of infection and how is the flu vaccine developed* using both text and animated images.¹⁵ Similar information and STIKO recommendations can be found on the RKI website.^{16,17,18}

In addition to the general information about influenza and vaccination, BZgA provides detailed explanations about influenza and vaccines, such as why influenza is far more serious and different from the common cold and the kinds of side effects (if any) that people may have to the influenza vaccine.

In support of the “We Go Ahead of Flu” campaign, BZgA provides specific information for at-risk groups¹⁹ with associated messages such as “flu can trigger pneumonia and other life-threatening complications so it is vital to receive the vaccination before the flu season.”²⁰

Figure 3: Poster



Posters

The “We Go Ahead of Flu” campaign produced a set of posters to attract the attention of people most at-risk of influenza.

Featuring an image of an older couple the poster message is that the annual influenza vaccine is highly recommended for people aged 60 years and over.²⁴

Another image features teenagers, adults and a child which is designed to remind both family and community of the collective responsibilities when it comes to the annual influenza vaccination.²⁵

Brochure

RKI and BZgA jointly produced several brochures to provide targeted information to at-risk populations including older persons and those with chronic conditions.

For older people the brochure describes possible complications of influenza, available vaccine options, timing, locations and cost of influenza vaccination.²⁶

Similarly, the brochure aimed at patients with underlying chronic diseases describes the consequences of influenza and the preventive measures for this vulnerable group.²⁷

An important message highlighted is that influenza infection can trigger lung or heart disease exacerbations.

News release

The BZgA press release announced the STIKO recommendations and the launch of the “We Go Ahead of Flu” campaign.^{28,29,30} A news article entitled “influenza – the elderly are badly affected” reveals the low vaccine rate among this population and emphasizes vaccination as the most important measure to protect against influenza.³¹

Figure 4: Brochure



Typische Grippe-symptome:

- ▶ plötzlich auftretender Krankheitsbeginn mit Fieber ($\geq 38,5^{\circ}\text{C}$)
- ▶ trockener Reizhusten
- ▶ Kopf-, Hals-, Muskel- und Gliederschmerzen
- ▶ Abgeschlagenheit und manchmal Übelkeit/Erbrechen

Komplikationen einer Grippeerkrankung wie eine Lungen- oder Herzmuskelentzündung sind möglich. Treten derartige Beschwerden auf, sollten Sie sofort Ihre Ärztin oder Ihren Arzt aufsuchen.

Non-government Organizations

German National Association of Senior Citizens

The German National Association of Senior Citizens (BAGSO) developed an informative brochure to answer the primary question “Which vaccinations are particularly important and for whom”.³²

Questions included how do vaccines work, why vaccinations are important, where do I go to be vaccinated and what is the process and are vaccines safety.

The importance of vaccination for older people and chronic patients is stressed with the messages that “vaccinations are especially important for older people and patients with chronic diseases, as they become more susceptible to infectious diseases due to weakening of their immune system.”

German Respiratory Society

The German Respiratory Society published several articles to alert German citizens with respiratory problems that *influenza is a serious illness*.

The importance and necessity of influenza vaccination for patients with lung disease is reinforced through messages that vaccination demonstrably protects against respiratory diseases and its consequences such as meningitis or blood poisoning.³³ Winter warnings are directed to those people with asthma and other chronic lung conditions who have greater likelihood of influenza and pneumococcal.³⁴

Figure 5: German National Association of Senior Citizens Informative Brochure















10 FRAGEN RUND UMS IMPFEN

Welche Impfungen für wen besonders wichtig sind

10 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON VACCINATION

Which vaccinations are particularly important and for whom

Status of National Influenza Vaccination Campaign

Comprehensive policies and programs	Influenza vaccination is recommended by government and advisory bodies for at-risk populations including older adults and people with chronic diseases	
	Influenza vaccination is funded under the National Immunization Program (NIP) and administered through the state program for at-risk populations including older adults and people with chronic disease	
Clear communication strategy	Published context-specific communication strategy and action plan which defines communication goals, target audiences, expected roles of partner organizations, communication tools and timeline	
Well-defined audience	Universal message distributed to undifferentiated population (general audiences regardless of age and underlying health condition)	
	Dedicated and tailored information for specific at-risk audience	
Multiple tools and channels	Online communication such as web content, digital technology, social media, online publications, email	
	Messages are disseminated offline by TV, radio, printout (e.g. leaflet, poster, brochure, outdoor ads)	
	Interactive communication including individual consultation, street campaign and face-to-face mobilization	
Realistic timeline	Timely flu season alert and vaccination reminder	
	National/regional events scheduled for intensive awareness campaign such as national vaccination day/week/month	
Regular updates of information	Information is updated on a regular basis to reflect the most recent evidence and policy, such as recommending newly licensed vaccines for specific recipient	
Engagement and support of civil society	Communication on influenza by patient associations, ageing organizations and advocacy groups	

 Well-developed
  Partially developed
  Not yet developed / No evidence

References

1. Health Nutrition and Population Statistics | DataBank. (n.d.). Retrieved 16 August 2019, from <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/health-nutrition-and-population-statistics>.
2. Population Estimates and Projections | DataBank. (n.d.). Retrieved 29 August 2019, from <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/population-estimates-and-projections>.
3. Noncommunicable Diseases Country Profiles 2018 | WHO. (n.d.). Retrieved 26 August 2019, from <http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/en/>.
4. Koch-Institut, R. (2019). Bericht zur Epidemiologie der Influenza in Deutschland Saison 2018/19 [Report]. Robert Koch-Institut. <https://doi.org/10.25646/6232>
5. OECD. (2017). Seasonal influenza coverage in the EU for over-65s. Percentage of over-65s vaccinated against seasonal influenza in each EU member state.
6. Schoefer, Y., Schaberg, T., Raspe, H., & Schaefer, T. (2007). Determinants of influenza and pneumococcal vaccination in patients with chronic lung diseases. *Journal of Infection*, 55(4), 347-352.
7. Federal Ministry of Health. (n.d.). BMG_Hausbroschuere_2016_EN.Pdf. Retrieved 10 October 2019, from https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/fileadmin/Dateien/Publikationen/Ministerium/Broschueren/BMG_Hausbroschuere_2016_EN.pdf.
8. RKI - Profile. (n.d.). Retrieved 10 October 2019, from https://www.rki.de/EN/Content/Institute/Profile/profile_node_en.html.
9. German Vaccination Schedule. (n.d.). Retrieved 10 October 2019, from <https://handbookgermany.de/en/live/vaccination.html>.
10. Kampagnen. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from <https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/kampagnen/>.
11. The organization and delivery of vaccination services in the European Union (2018). (n.d.). Retrieved 10 October 2019, from <https://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/the-organization-and-delivery-of-vaccination-services-in-the-european-union-2018>
12. Germany_ip.Pdf. (n.d.). Retrieved 10 October 2019, from http://venice.cineca.org/documents/germany_ip.pdf.
13. Standing Committee on Vaccination. (2019). In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Standing_Committee_on_Vaccination&oldid=886536704
14. RKI - Informationsmaterial Zum Impfen - Impfkalender in 20 Sprachen. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/Infekt/Impfen/Materialien/Impfkalender_mehrsprachig_Uebersicht_tab.html.
15. Influenza (Grippe). Bundesgesundheitsministerium. (n.d.). Retrieved 10 October 2019, from <https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/themen/praevention/gesundheitsgefahren/influenza.html>.
16. RKI - Vaccinations A - Z - Flu Vaccination: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers. Retrieved 10 October 2019, from https://www.rki.de/SharedDocs/FAQ/Impfen/Influenza/faq_ges.html?nn=2375548.
17. RKI - Influenza - Influenza Vaccination: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers. (n.d.). Retrieved 10 October 2019, from https://www.rki.de/SharedDocs/FAQ/Impfen/Influenza/faq_ges.html?nn=2370434.
18. RKI - Influenza - Frequently Asked Questions and Answers to the Flu. (n.d.). Retrieved 10 October 2019, from https://www.rki.de/SharedDocs/FAQ/Influenza/FAQ_Liste.html?nn=2370434.
19. Grippeimpfung Für Alle Risikogruppen - Impfen-Info.De. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from <https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/grippeimpfung/>.
20. Fragen und Antworten zur Grippeimpfung. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from <https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/grippeimpfung/fragen-und-antworten/>.
21. RKI - Informationsmaterial Zum Impfen - Informationsmaterialien Zum Impfen in Verschiedenen Sprachen. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/Infekt/Impfen/Materialien/materialien_fremdsprachig_inhalt.html.
22. Grippe (Influenza). (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from <https://www.infektionsschutz.de/erregersteckbriefe/grippe-influenza/>.
23. Detail. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/mediathek/printmaterialien/detail/?tx_bzgashop_pi2%5BarticleNumber%5D=2397&tx_bzgashop_pi2%5BparentArticles%5D=0&cHash=fdbe4992f3d97a9dd7e1bdc5474c4343.
24. Detail. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/mediathek/printmaterialien/detail/?tx_bzgashop_pi2%5BarticleNumber%5D=2390&tx_bzgashop_pi2%5BparentArticles%5D=0&cHash=4b2e4c1a4f32aed2bb41466970feb7f7.

25. Detail. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/mediathek/printmaterialien/detail/?tx_bzgashop_pi2%5BarticleNumber%5D=2117&tx_bzgashop_pi2%5BparentArticles%5D=0&cHash=75e5ee4cef6bd768a7d59943b48b6366.
26. Detail. (n.d.). Retrieved 17 August 2020, from https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/mediathek/printmaterialien/detail.html?tx_bzgashop_fe6%5BarticleNumber%5D=1362&tx_bzgashop_fe6%5BparentArticles%5D=0&cHash=2679546863f7ef40b725bdf9ae1c6d6f
27. Detail. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/mediathek/printmaterialien/detail/?tx_bzgashop_pi2%5BarticleNumber%5D=1993&tx_bzgashop_pi2%5BparentArticles%5D=0&cHash=eebca96e9f15308c3de77bc9c3252af8.
28. Aktuelles. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from <https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/aktuelles/artikel/der-grippe-zuvorkommen/>.
29. Aktuelles. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from <https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/aktuelles/artikel/mehr-schuetzt-mehr/>.
30. Aktuelles. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from <https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/aktuelles/artikel/zu-wenige-menschen-lassen-sich-gegen-grippe-impfen/>.
31. Aktuelles. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 October 2019, from <https://www.impfen-info.de/cv/aktuelles/artikel/influenza-vor-allem-aeltere-menschen-stark-betroffen/>.
32. Federal Association of Senior Organizations. (n.d.). WEB_Impfbroschuere_deutsch-Englisch_3.Pdf. Retrieved 11 October 2019, from https://www.bagso-service.de/fileadmin/user_upload/redaktion/Projekte/WEB_Impfbroschuere_deutsch-englisch_3.pdf.
33. German Respiratory Society. (n.d.). 2018-03-06_PM_DGP_Antibiotika_F.Pdf. Retrieved 11 October 2019, from https://pneumologie.de/fileadmin/user_upload/2018-03-06_PM_DGP_Antibiotika_F.PDF.
34. German Respiratory Society. (n.d.). 041217_PM_Asthma_im_Winter_B.Pdf. Retrieved 11 October 2019, from https://pneumologie.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Presse/041217_PM_Asthma_im_Winter_B.pdf.

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION ON ADULT INFLUENZA VACCINATION

vaccines4life.com/changing-the-conversation/

