Vaccinations are globally recognized one of the most important tools for primary prevention of infectious diseases, but the spread of anti-vaccination movements and the availability of unreliable health information on the Web can negatively influence the adherence to vaccination campaigns.

Aim of the study is the evaluation of Italian Web Pages contents about vaccinations to provide more data and to address prevention strategies in countries shifting from the “duty” to the “right” of vaccination (like Italy).

A systematic Review of the freely accessible Websites written in Italian was conducted separately by two researchers in April 2011. We have used “Copernic Agent”, a software including eight different search engines that evaluated the top hundred results provided by each one. The keywords were: “vaccinazioni” (vaccinations), “effetti collaterali” (side effects), “rischi” (risks), “pericolì” (dangers), “danno” (damage), “consigli” (advice). Researchers compared qualitative aspects between pro and against vaccination WebPages using CHI-SQUARE test (p<0.05).

The 144 web pages found were: 64 websites, 27 blogs, 19 forums, 23 documents and 11 “other”. 67% of results was against vaccinations, frequently placed on top positions, thus enhancing accessibility. Most of the pages written by physicians were obviously pro vaccinations, while it sounds strange that 24% of them were against; all institutional pages (8%) were pro, but in less prominent position. Main statistical differences between pro and against vaccination pages resulted in use of emotional images, personal negative experiences, and frequent promotion of books against vaccines or alternative medicine products in anti-vaccination WebPages. The main reasons to criticism were: inefficacy, low safety profile and stakeholder’s interests.

Availability and Quality of vaccines information in Internet: A Systematic Review and implication in Public Health.

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This study underlines the great number of anti-vaccination movements on the Italian Web; other European Countries should evaluate contents of their Websites and strengthen the availability of reliable and evidence-based information to promote health education campaigns, mainly with new communication strategies, and to allow scared parents to choose about vaccinations consciously.

References