

HIGH PREVENTION: VACCINE – an awareness campaign by ENGAGe Teens Italy

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INTRODUCTION:

At present, the only gynaecological tumours that can be prevented through vaccination are those caused by a HPV infection: cervical cancer (that can be early detected by PAP Smear), head and neck cancer, vulvar and vaginal cancer.

In Italy, a public health programme for HPV vaccination is operative and started with the girls born in 1996 and with boys born in 2006. Vaccination is free for boys and girls from 11 years to 18/26 on average, according to the regional policies; it is also available for women with pre-cancerous cervical lesions due to HPV infection. The call for vaccination is active also for women 25 years old at their first HPV screening. The goal is to vaccinate 95% of the population.

NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF HPV VACCINATION

The vaccination offer varies slightly in the 21 regions, according to the regionally-based organization of the Italian Health Service. The programme offers free vaccination to all 11 yrs old boys and girls. Every region has extended the gratuity as shown in this map.



In nearly all regions, free vaccination is offered also to 25yrs old women at the call for the first cervical screening and to all subjects with documented pre-cancerous lesions. In some also to people at risk of developing an HPV related cancer. For all cases not included, vaccination can be received by payment of a reduced fee.

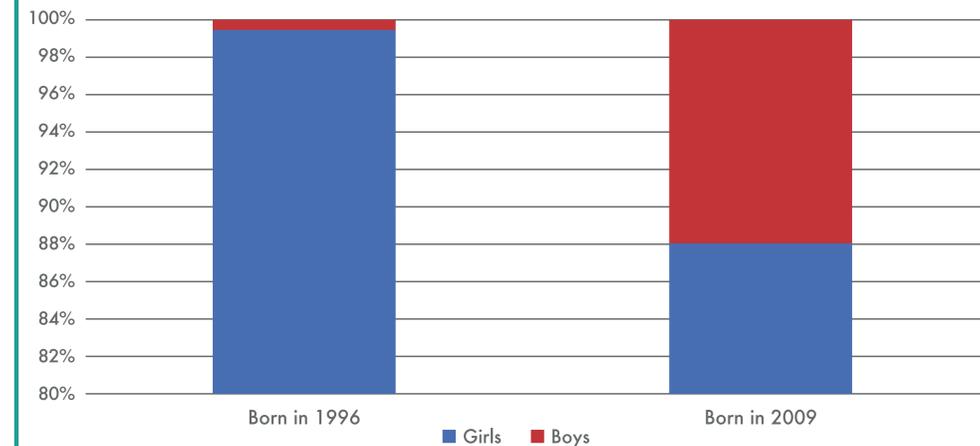
METHOD

We analysed the regional vaccination data (complete course) of boys and girls born 1996 - 2009, comparing the various percentages throughout the years.

Female population (1996) 43,77 %
Female population (2008) 30,32%

Male population (1996) 0,31 %
Male population (2008) 24,17 %

Italy: vaccination rate* comparison born in 1996 vs. born in 2009



*complete course
Source: ITALIAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH – Data at 31.12.2021

This data show that the vaccination rate in the female population decreased, while that in the male population increased and that in both cases we are very far from the WHO and EU goal of 95% vaccination rate.

This decrease could be due also to decrease in birth rate, but it is mainly caused by scarce information to families, scarce sexual education in schools, leading teens to browse the web for information with the risk to find fake news or erroneous information.

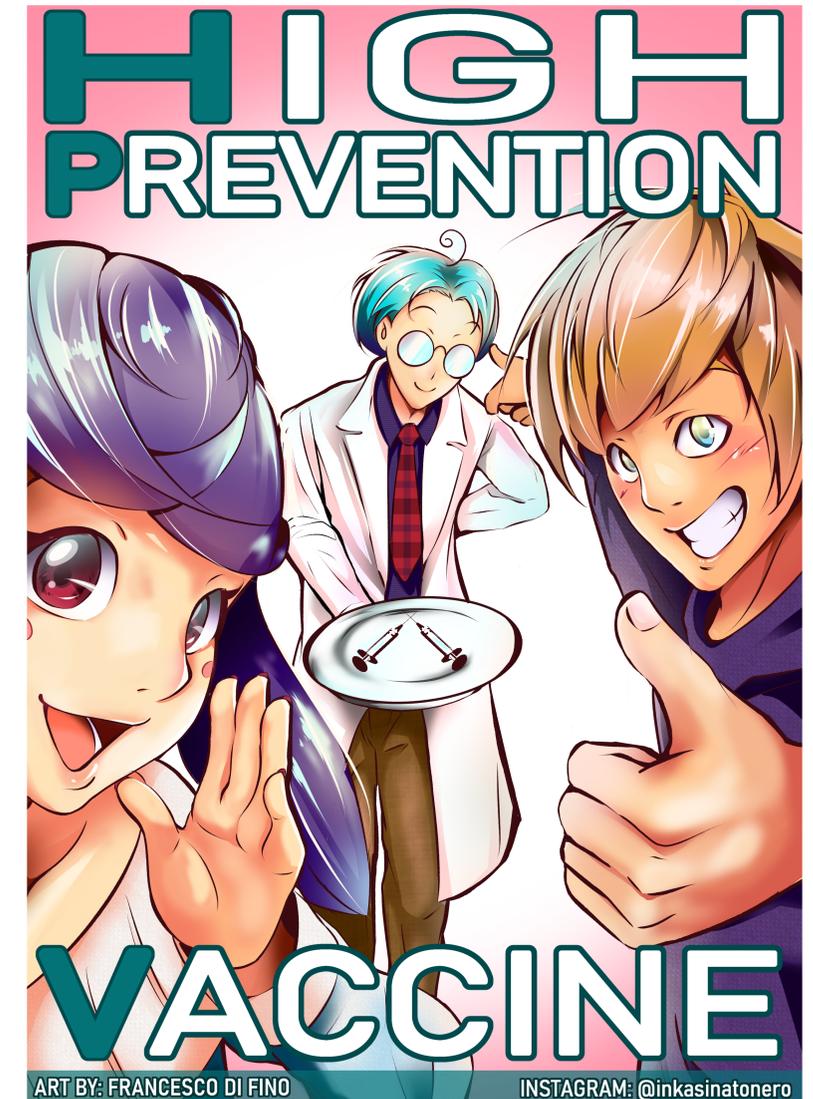
PURPOSE

Notwithstanding this wide vaccination plan, Italy is far from the goal. The reason could be found first of all in the lack of information, education and knowledge, leading to scarce prevention, in prejudices against vaccination and in stigma, leading to the absence of sexual education in schools.

We'd like to educate young people to choose wisely about their vaccination, with the help of various professional figures, such as PAGs, paediatricians, gynaecologists, psychosexuologist, general practioners. Our final aim is to favour a person-centred approach: the bio-psycho-social one.

ABOUT US

We are one of the ENGAGe Teens groups, the project involving young people 13/19 years old who accepted to engage in raising awareness among peers about HPV vaccination and Gynae Cancers in general. In Italy, we are connected with Acto Puglia, a member of Acto - Alliance against ovarian cancer, which is the Italian network of 8 PAGs involved in the fight against Gynae Cancers. Operating at national and regional level in Piedmont, Lombardy, Tuscany, Campania, Apulia, Sicily and Triveneto.



CONCLUSIONS

For this reason, we planned an awareness campaign to be performed through social communication and school meetings, our **High Prevention Vaccine** campaign. Our ENGAGe Teens group wants to talk about HPV differently, using a "peer to peer" approach and starting an "educating community" to improve vaccination coverage and reach the desired goal.

Our project can be available to anybody. We'd like to use the poster as a map to discuss the problem of scarce vaccination during the meetings we want to organise.