

NATIONAL INFANT VACCINATION COVERAGE IN ITALY, 2003

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Objectives: to obtain a standardised estimate of infant vaccination coverage in Italy, and to compare results with the previous survey, conducted in 1998.

Methods: Cluster surveys have been simultaneously conducted in January-February 2003 in 19 out of the 20 Italian regions. In each of 18 regions 210 families participated in the surveys, selected through two stage cluster sampling technique from 2001 birth-cohort registration list. In 3 main cities and one region with less than 1,000 new-borns per year a simple random sample of 100 families was selected. Vaccination status of children aged 12-24 months was determined during household visits, through parent's interview and review of vaccination cards. The vaccine coverage was calculated in each region for three doses of tetanus, diphtheria (DT), polio, hepatitis B (HBV), pertussis, and Hib, and for one dose of measles vaccine for children older than 15 months of age.

Results: As of 28 April 2003, data were available for 7 regions (3 in northern, 2 in central, and 2 in southern Italy), i.e. 1,361 children. In all Regions but one, vaccination coverage was > 94% for DT, polio, HBV, and pertussis, > 89% for Hib, and ranged from 78 to 85% for measles. In the remaining region, coverage was 90% for DT, polio, HBV and pertussis, 64% for Hib, and 56% for measles.

Conclusions: Vaccine coverage is satisfactory for all vaccines except measles. In fact, even though an increase has occurred and geographical differences have decreased, measles coverage is still too low to interrupt transmission.

