

ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES AMONG PARENTS WHO REFUSE VACCINATION

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Abstract

Parental refusal of vaccine is a growing concern as there is an increased occurrence of vaccine preventable diseases in children. However, there are limited studies that have looked into various alternative methods practised by parents who refused standard vaccination especially in Malaysia. This study aimed at exploring alternative methods taken by parents to enhance child immunity. Twenty seven (27) parents were interviewed in Selangor between July and September 2017 via semi-structured interview questions. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and thematic analysis was conducted to ascertain key themes. Three main themes were recognized: 1) selective food practices, 2) alternative lifestyle practices and 3) traditional or complimentary medicine (TCM) /supplement consumption practices. Consumption of As-Sunnah food, fresh food, healthy eating, avoiding processed food, junk food and synthetic flavouring are among selective food practices reported by parents. Alternative lifestyle practice encompasses preference for children to stay away from crowded places. Some parents preferred TCM or supplement consumption to substitute vaccinations such as homeopathy, traditional medicine and vitamins. As a summary, parental alternative practices are used to substitute vaccination which can never replace the true functionality of vaccines as these alternatives are merely compliments. It is recommended that MOH should formulate interventions that will alleviate misconceptions in order to decrease vaccine refusal rate.

Keywords: vaccine refusal, alternative practices, food practices, lifestyles practices, traditional and complimentary medicine (TCM) /supplement practices, Malaysia