


## Protecting the future: Childhood vaccination as a prevention and health promotion action in primary care

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Pâmela Lorrane Sousa Lima<sup>1</sup>, Raylanna Oliveira Silva<sup>2</sup>, Nágila Anne da Silva Pessoa<sup>3</sup>, Hayla Bertrine Guedes Barbosa Fernandes<sup>4</sup>, Ana Vitória Correia da Cruz<sup>5</sup>, Carlos Henrique Nonato Prates<sup>6</sup> and Vanessa Rodrigues Silva Fraga<sup>7</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Childhood vaccination, essential for global public health, plays a crucial role in preventing diseases and reducing morbidity and associated health costs. Despite scientific advances, challenges persist, such as misinformation and lack of access to health services. The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the drop in vaccination coverage rates in Brazil, requiring specific actions. Thus, this intervention project aimed to address critical issues related to childhood immunization, focusing on informing and sensitizing children, parents and guardians about the importance of vaccines, presenting the Basic Vaccination Schedule and highlighting the relevance in disease prevention. The project, implemented in the second half of 2023, contributed to raising awareness among the population about the importance of vaccination, especially pregnant women, the elderly, and children. The dynamics included theoretical presentations, group debates, learning dynamics and distribution of gifts and informative posters. The project reinforced that childhood vaccination is crucial to protect children against diseases and their potential sequelae. By highlighting the understanding of parents or guardians about the importance of vaccination, the benefits for children's health, preventing infectious diseases and potential complications, were emphasized. Therefore, the continuous need to develop new health actions aimed at vaccination to mitigate these challenges and ensure the protection of public health is emphasized.

**Keywords:** Vaccination, Basic Vaccination Schedule, Vaccination of the child.

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<sup>1</sup> Undergraduate student in Medicine  
Standard Integrated Colleges – Guanambi.  
E-mail: Pamellorrane2004@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Undergraduate student in Medicine  
Standard Integrated Colleges - Guanambi.  
E-mail: raylanna.oliveira27@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Pharmacist with a postgraduate degree in Hospital and Oncology Pharmacy.  
Standard Integrated Colleges - Guanambi.  
E-mail: nagilaanne@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup> Biochemical Pharmacist with a postgraduate degree in Clinical Analysis  
Standard Integrated Colleges - Guanambi.  
E-mail: hbbarbos@yahoo.com.br

<sup>5</sup> Undergraduate student in Medicine  
Standard Integrated Colleges - Guanambi.  
E-mail: aninhacruz.med@gmail.com

<sup>6</sup> Graduating in Medicine  
Standard Integrated Colleges - Guanambi.  
E-mail: carloshnp123@gmail.com

<sup>7</sup> Graduate Nurse in Midwifery  
Standard Integrated Colleges - Guanambi.  
E-mail: vanvangbi@hotmail.com



## INTRODUCTION

Childhood vaccination is one of the fundamental pillars of public health around the world, playing a crucial role in preventing disease and promoting children's well-being. In addition, the vaccine plays an important role in reducing morbidity and health-related costs. However, despite scientific advancements and awareness campaigns, there are still significant challenges, such as misinformation, fear of vaccines, and lack of access to adequate health services. This results in gaps in vaccination coverage that can lead to outbreaks of preventable diseases (PALMIERI, 2023).

In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic had a considerable impact on childhood vaccination in Brazil. Data from the National Immunization Program (PNI) reveal that there was a reduction in vaccination coverage rates during the height of the pandemic. Since 2020, Brazil has faced a drop in routine immunization coverage in children. Recent studies indicate that the application of some immunizers has fallen by 65% in some Brazilian states. This was due to disruptions in health services, parents' fear of taking their children to clinics, and the spread of misinformation about vaccines (ZORZETTO, 2022).

Thus, the imperative of prioritizing the promotion and encouragement of childhood vaccination today becomes clear. It is crucial that society, especially parents and guardians, have access to accurate and evidence-backed information about the importance of vaccines. In this sense, academic extension projects, especially those related to the health area, play a crucial role in addressing the needs of the community and promoting health education (SANTANA, 2021).

In this context, the extension project "Protecting the Future: The Importance of Childhood Vaccination" seeks to address crucial issues related to the immunization of children, with a special focus on informing and sensitizing both children and their parents and guardians. This project aims to promote a deeper understanding of the importance of vaccines by presenting preventable diseases, the current Basic Vaccination Schedule and highlighting their relevance in disease prevention.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

It is an Educational Intervention project on the "Importance of Childhood Vaccination". It was an event that aimed to promote the dissemination of scientific knowledge related to vaccination. In addition, moments for conversation were held with a method of collective participation to discuss the relevance of vaccination in the prevention of diseases. These discussions allowed participants to express their opinions and reflect on the importance of vaccines in this particular context.

The participants of the project were 50 parents and guardians of children and adolescents up to 14 years of age, with the participation of pregnant women and the elderly.

The intervention work was developed at the Eurivaldo Cardoso Vieira Basic Health Unit, located in the Ipiranga neighborhood, in the municipality of Guanambi – Bahia, which covers a



population of medium economic, social and cultural level. This unit was designated because it has a high demand for a vaccination room and also because it is an internship field, which facilitates our access to services.

The work was developed by medical students from the 4th period of the Standard Integrated Colleges - FIPGuanambi, carried out in the second semester of 2023 and was applied during the month of October.

First, the authors of the project were presented. Then, the educational project began, through a lecture on the importance of vaccination for public health and childhood vaccination, as well as the functioning of vaccines and their side effects, then the vaccination schedule of children, adults, the elderly and pregnant women was presented. Then, the presentation of the theme was made, through a theoretical exposition with relevant data so that the population could be sensitized to the problem.

Subsequently, a dynamic was carried out with true and false signs, with the purpose of measuring the learning and understanding acquired by the target audience after the lecture. Therefore, moments of conversations were held in groups where the topics related to the project were debated to clarify doubts that were of interest to the target audience. Finally, gifts were distributed, along with posters with information about the importance of vaccination, with emphasis on children, the elderly and pregnant women, who were exposed at the UBS.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the conclusion of the actions in this intervention project, a contribution was observed to the awareness of the population (pregnant women, the elderly and children) about the importance of vaccination in the prevention of diseases. In addition to mobilizing health professionals and medical students, as well as the general population, to address this issue. The students were given the opportunity to learn about the growing complexity of the Brazilian vaccination schedule, the difficulties in accessing health care resources, as well as the presentation of the population to the services; emphasizing the discussions about the National Immunization Program (PNI) and its importance in the training of future doctors. For the users, the study showed a good level of knowledge regarding the prevention of infectious diseases as a purpose of the vaccination process, in addition to the awareness of the safety and efficacy of this method. However, the universal supply of vaccines in the public health system and their facilitated access to the population, given the extensive national network of basic health services, together with other surveillance actions, have been fundamental for the elimination and control of diseases such as smallpox, diphtheria, poliomyelitis and measles, responsible for a large number of victims in Brazil; Therefore, it was found that this intervention collaborated with the dissemination of information in the formation of a more informed and empowered society, regarding its importance, safety, efficacy and possible adverse effects, in



order to increase adherence to the method, consequently contributing to the improvement of the quality of health for all.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Childhood vaccination is a simple, safe and effective way to protect children against diseases, even before they come into contact with them. They activate the body's natural defenses to build a specific resistance to each infection and make the immune system stronger, so vaccination is essential from the gestational period, where they have the protection cover for mother and fetus.

In this way, the project highlighted the importance of knowledge about the importance of childhood vaccination, emphasizing the benefits brought to children's health, such as the prevention of infectious diseases, since babies need to be stimulated to produce defenses against microorganisms that are in the environment, so that they are not susceptible to contracting diseases that may present risks. In addition to complications from these conditions, some very serious and others even fatal.

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