

Vaccination: The role of medical chambers and physicians

The case of Croatia

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Year 1791

Jastrebarsko near Zagreb, **dr. Ferdinand Hadvig**

- smallpox disease vaccination
 - vaccine for everybody
 - mothers consent for children
 - instructions for mothers
 - free of charge

Today

- **centralized system of vaccination**
- clearly defined objectives and plans
- **monitoring system** of implementation
- **surveillance system** for possible side effects
- **alarm system** with reminder for population

Ministry of Health

- **Programme of mandatory immunization** – 3y
- special implementation act – each year

Immunisation programme:

- based on **expertise and proposal of the CIPH**
- financed from Croatian Health Insurance Fund

10 mandatory vaccines:

- diphtheria since 1948
- tuberculosis since 1948
- tetanus since 1955
- whooping cough since 1959
- polio since 1961
- measles since 1968
- mumps since 1976
- rubella since 1975
- hepatitis B since 1999
- Hib meningitis since 2002

Pediatrician:

- **obligation** to inform the parents about vaccin
- **obligation** to recommend vaccination

Parents rejection:



Department of Epidemiology at Public Health Institute - **another consulting**

Still unchanged decision:



- a pediatrician reports to the Sanitary Inspection of the Ministry of Health
- **possible fine** of 2,000 kuna

High rate of vaccination

Croatian Institute of Public Health:

- almost completely eradication of most of the diseases prevented by mandatory vaccination



diphtheria, whooping cough,
measles, rubella, polio, mumps

tetanus

↓ 97 %

tuberculosis

↓ 93 %

hepatitis B

↓ 65 %

Rising of anti-vaccination movement few years ago

Civil Initiative "Vaccination - a right to choose":

- **elimination of legal obligations** and fines for parents who refuse vaccination
- **abolish the fine for doctors** who do not want to recommend vaccination because of conscientious
- **equal admission terms** in nurseries and kindergarten
- **compensation fund**
- **national forum** for vaccination policy

sensational inscriptions in the **media**



many inaccurate, incomplete and vague information
often **without serious argumentation**



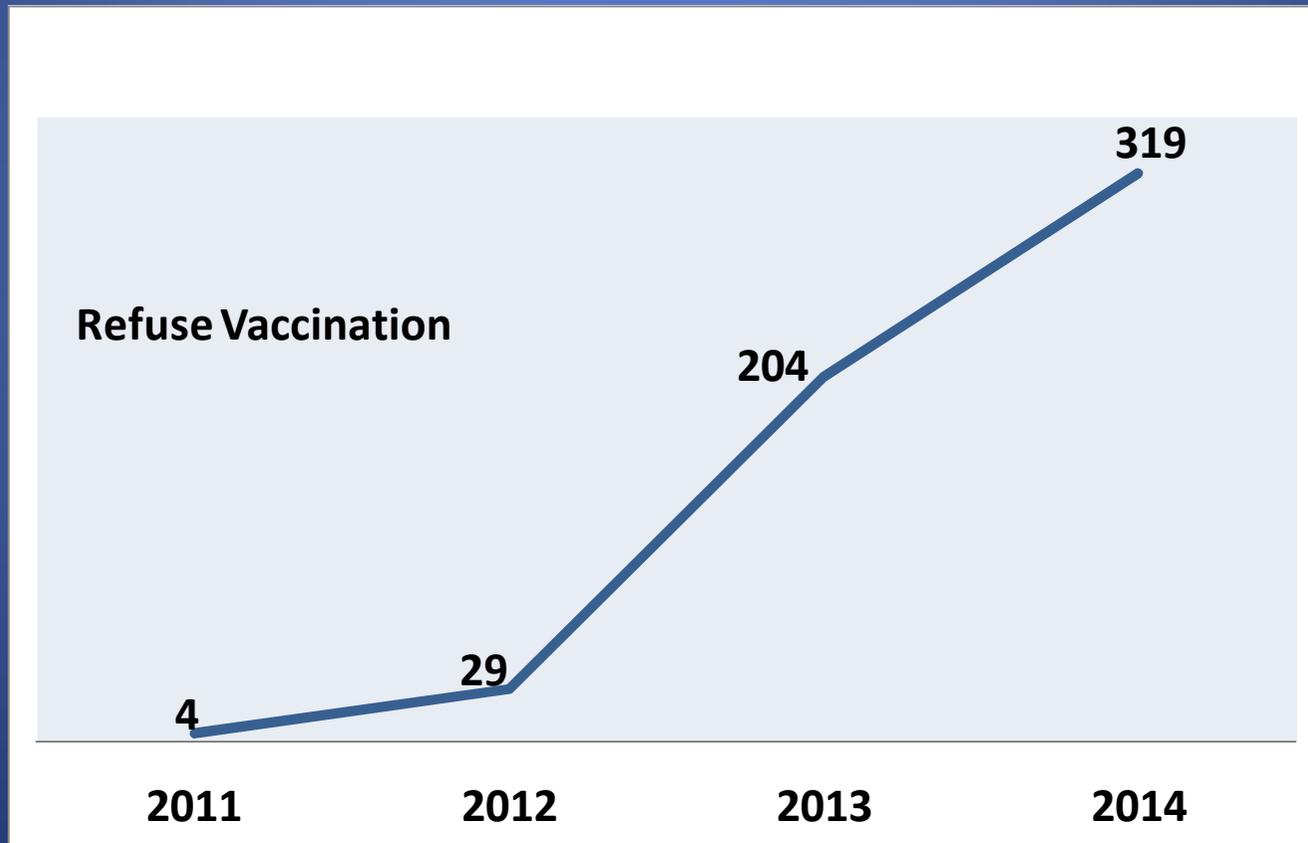
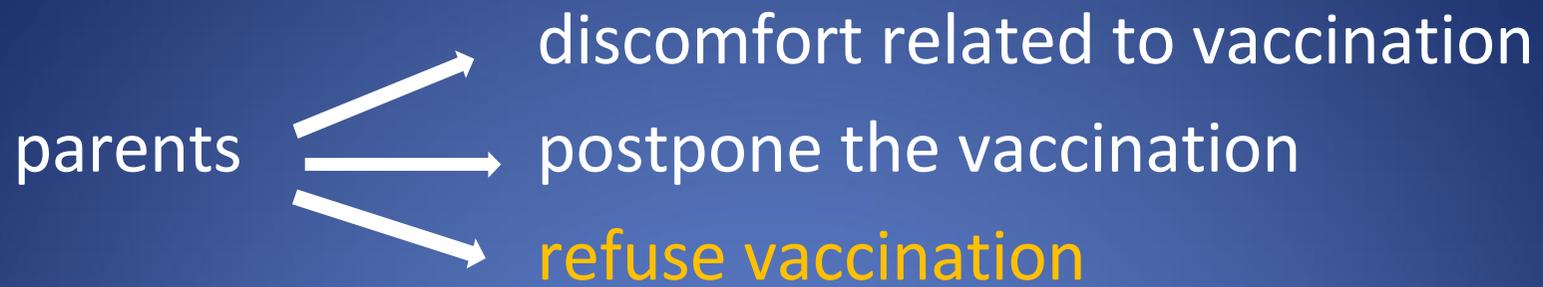
lack of clarity who actually represents the
profession



frightened parents and patients



distrust in the vaccines and vaccination,
as well as **in the health system itself**



Main reasons:

- **fear** of the side effects
- certain **life beliefs** or attitudes, (philosophical, religious, political or other)
- **insufficient informations** and knowledge
- **lack of responsibility**

What if the growth trend continues ?!

December 2014, outbreak of measles

In the beginning

- most of diseased were in contacts with people who become **infected abroad**

Further development

- increased number of patients who do **not have any direct or indirect contact with foreign countries**
- vast majority were **not vaccinated**

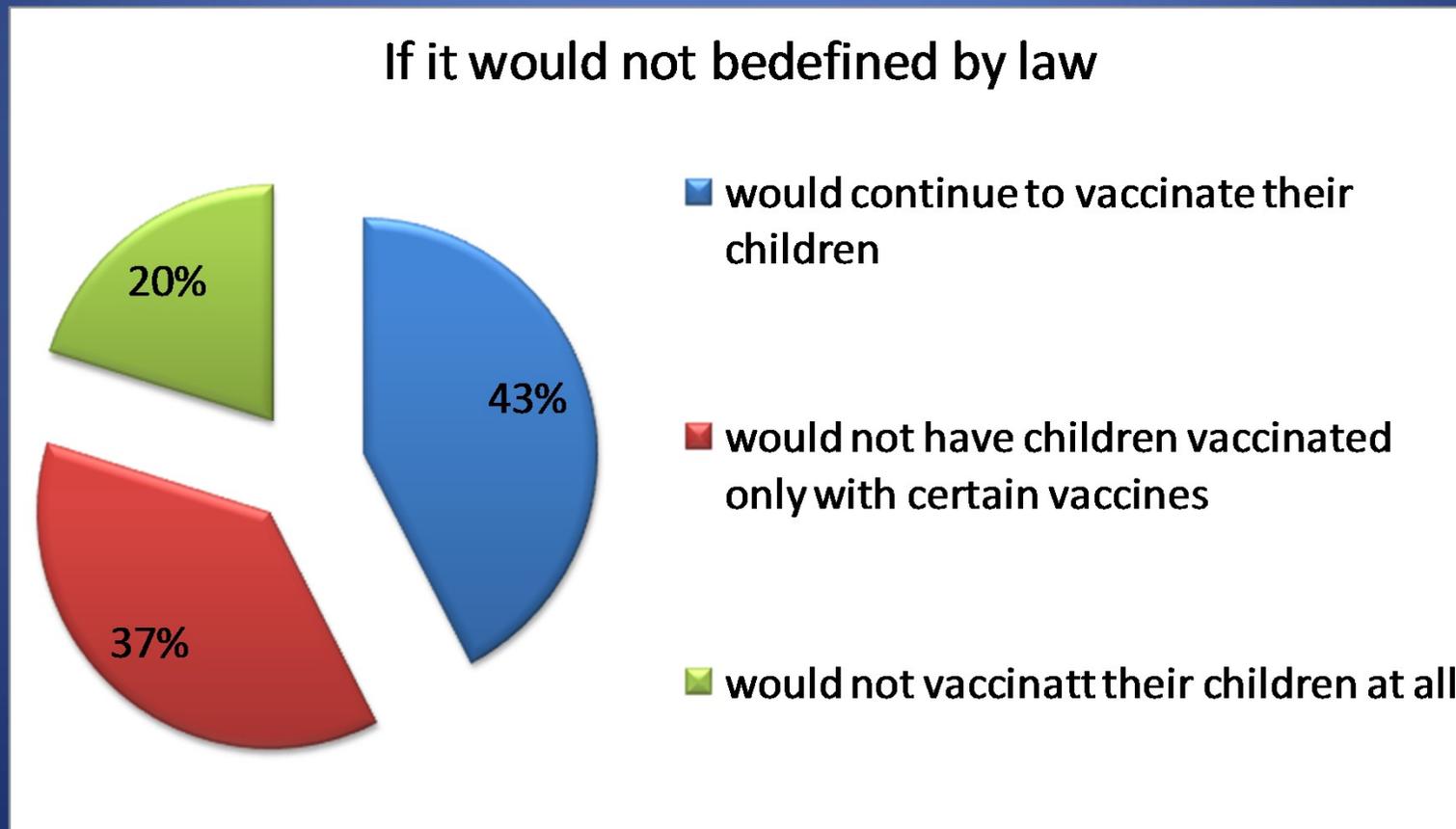
End of May 2015

- **total of 200 patients**

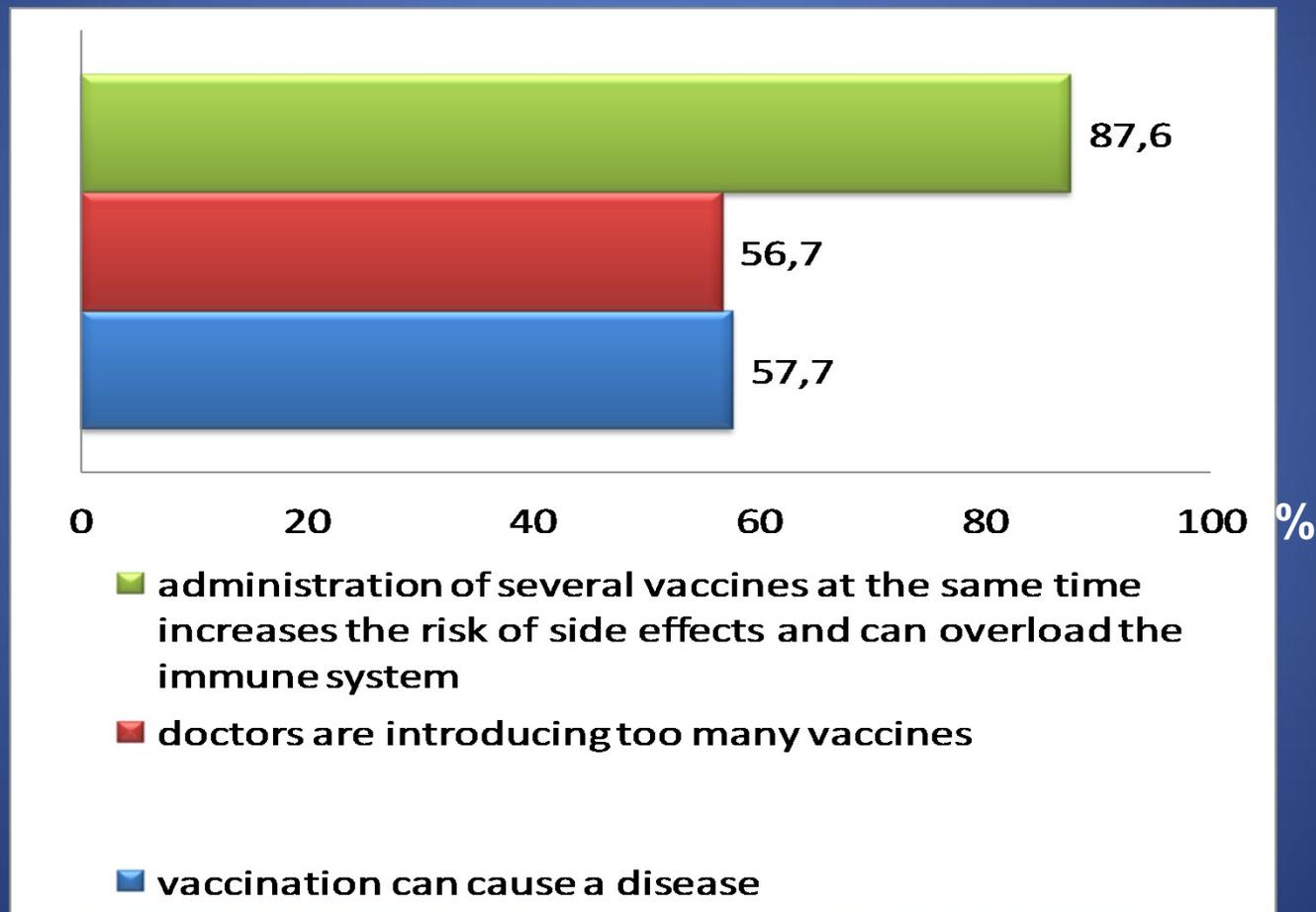
Survey on the perception of vaccination

- *Department of Psychology of the University of Zagreb*

- sample of 883 parents or future parents



Fear - main detected motive for the negative attitude



conflicting legal regulations:

Patient Protection Act

Health Care Act



patient has the **right to accept or reject** the diagnostic or therapeutic procedure

the **right to refuse** examinations and treat.

Law on Protection of Population from Infectious Diseases:

- 
- parents **who refuse to vaccinate** their child **can get a fine** of 2000 kunas (260 €).
 - doctor** who does not conduct vaccination fine up to 80 000 kunas

In case of repeated failure:

- the doctor is threatened with **permanent loss of the License**

Preschool Education Act:

- no kindergarten for unvaccinated children

Constitutional Court of Croatia (2014):

- rejected the proposal to review the constitutionality of mandatory immunization
- parents can not decide for vaccination
- accepted the the position of the Ministry of Health :
 - vaccination the best protection against potentially dangerous diseases
 - the child's right to health is over the right of parents to choose

Two public debate in 2014:

- initiative of the **Ministry of Health**
- proposal of the new *Infectious Diseases Protection Law*

- initiative of **Office of the Ombudsman for Children**

2015

Parents charged **pediatrician** to the Criminal Court

- *endangering life of the child with generally dangerous act or device*
- in case of conviction penalty of **up to 5 years**

Ministry of Health changed the the regulation

- **parents are not obligated to make a written statement on the refusal**

Result:

pediatricians under pressure

Parents who do not want to vaccinate children

- possibility to choose another pediatrician
- way for avoiding vaccination

March 2015, Zagreb

Symposium on Vaccination

Croatian Institute for Public Health

Croatian Society for Prevent. and Social Pediatrics

Croatian Epidemiological Society

Written instructions requested by pediatricians:

- **how to record the refusal**
- **how to report parents**

Ministry of Health **will prepare the checklist**

March 2015, Zagreb

Croatian Epidemiological Society:

- translation and adaptation of *Childhood Vaccination Communication Action Guide* of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC):

*Let's talk about protection –
A Practical Guide
for Health Professionals*



Croatian Medical Chamber

- supports the implementation of expert-based recommendations to immunization programs taking into account the expert opinion of the public health specialists

- *is ready to provide assistance to colleagues who are exposed to media criticism for the implementation of expert-based recommendations on vaccination*

Thank you for your attention

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