



TEDUTRAIN' 21
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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



Opposition to Vaccination

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
Berin Emirođlu



TED UNIVERSITY TRAINING
AND DEVELOPMENT
CONFERENCE 2021

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Highly esteemed participants,

I am Hüseyin Hikmet Findık, a junior student at TED University, under the Department of Computer Engineering. I proudly would like to welcome you all to the TEDUMUN Training and Development Conference 2021, which we all believe will lead to a lot of new beginnings. While thinking about a training and development conference, it is impossible not to refer to what annoys us in real life. There is no doubt that day by day, the 21st century shows us the value of equality, democracy, justice, and every democratic norm that we deeply needed for peaceful communities. In the Turkey of the 21st century, it is obvious that we are stumbling at every single one of those values. These values create an environment that makes us happy, peaceful. It has been hard, sad, and desperate for us to see every single democratic norm being violated one by one, every day, right in front of our eyes.

When he first stepped into Havza, Samsun, while everything around was worse than ever, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk said “They do not want to kill us, they want to put us into the grave alive. We are now at the edge of the pit. One last tenacity can save us.”. When the hope ends, tenacity begins. Today is the day to show that tenacity to build a better society, to build a better Turkey, and to build a better world. On this road, we believe that we need every single piece of an idea to ensure the rights of every single one of us.

Those hard days showed us how important it is for us to be in a routine. Leaving our houses every day for specific purposes is one of the most important necessities for the sanity of humanity. Today, we owe big thanks to science and everyone involved in the process of the foundation of the vaccine. Then we literally saw what ignorance and bigotry can do to humanity, we are still battling with and losing thousands of people every day to an illness that we had the cure of it already. I hope this committee can make any tiny bit of positive effect on the necessity of awareness and education specifically on these kinds of important global issues. I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General Mr. Berin Emiroğlu for coming up with that idea that will take attention and will create a difference.

Sincerely,

Hüseyin Hikmet Findık

Secretary-General of TEDUTRAIN'21

LETTER FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL

Most Distinguished Participants,

It is my utmost honour to welcome you all to the first TED University Model United Nations Development and Training Conference 2021. I am Berin EMİROĞLU. Currently, I am a junior student in Political Science and International Relations department. At this conference, I will be serving as the Under-Secretary-General of the World Health Organization Committee.

The agenda item of our committee is Responding to the Opposition to Vaccination. As we all know, we have been in a pandemic for almost two years now. With the increase in the vaccination processes, the refusal and opposition to the vaccines also increased. It is crucial to understand the importance of vaccines for the health of society. Also emphasizing the opposers of the vaccines is the key to find a solution that includes all parts of the societies.

Before finishing this letter, I would like to thank our Secretary-General Mr. Hüseyin Hikmet Findık for his efforts, understanding, and support throughout this whole process. I also would like to thank every member of the TEDUTRAIN'21 conference for their hard works.

Lastly, if you have any kinds of questions or inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me via berinemiroglu07@gmail.com. I am looking forward to your participation and I hope you have an unforgettable experience in TEDUTRAIN'21.

Best Regards,

Berin EMİROĞLU

Under-Secretary-General of
World Health Organization

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction to the Committee**
- II. Definition of key terms**
 - A. Vaccine-Preventable Disease**
 - B. Expanded Programme on Immunization**
- III. Introduction and the History of to the Topic**
- IV. Discussion of the Topic**

- A. Vaccine-Preventable Disease Awareness**

- 1. The Role of The Culture**

- 2. The role of the media**

- B. Vaccine Decision-making and Vaccine Refusal**

- 1. Religious and Cultural Aspects**

- 2. Passive Refusal**

- 3. Concerns about the safety of the Vaccine**

- C. Approaches to decrease the vaccine refusal**

- 1. Social Campaigns**

- 2. Monitoring and Surveillance**

- V. Conclusion**

- VI. Questions To be Addressed**

- VII. References**

- I. Introduction to the Committee**

Established on April 7, 1948, the main objective of WHO is "the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health"¹. WHO is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and it has six regional offices and 150 field offices worldwide. The WHO relies on private funding from donors and, assessed and voluntary contributions from member states.²

Currently, the WHO is directed by Tedros Adhanom, who is an Ethiopian biologist, public health researcher³. He is the first Director-General who is not a medical doctor. Also, he became the First Director-General elected in a voting procedure open to all member states.⁴

As stated in 2012 the role of WHO in public health can be summed up as providing leadership on critical matters regarding health and encouraging partnerships where collective action is needed, monitoring the health situation, and assessing health trends.⁵

II. Definition of Key Words

A. Vaccine-Preventable Disease

The term vaccine-preventable disease (VPC) is a disease that has a preventive vaccine. If an individual acquires such a vaccine and the disease is being prevented by doing so, the mentioned disease becomes a VPC. And if an individual dies from a VPC, the death of that individual is considered a vaccine-preventable death. The diseases such as Cholera, COVID-19, Ebola, Hepatitis A, B, E, and Tuberculosis can be given as an example to VPC.⁶

B. Expanded Programme on Immunization

Expanded Programme on Immunization is a programme conducted to eradicate the smallpox disease. EPI was launched in 1974 to make sure that every child across the world benefited from life-saving vaccines. Even today EPI still works in harmony with other public health programmers to achieve better health conditions all over the world.

III. Introduction and the History of the Topic

Opposing to vaccination dates back to Edward Jenner (1749-1823). His works consisted of using the cowpox virus to create an immunization for the smallpox virus. In 1776, Jenner presented his works to the Royal Society of London, explaining that after the successful vaccinations 13 people had gained the immunization. Shortly with the widespread of immunization the mortality rates of smallpox had been significantly decreased between the dates of the eighteenth century and nineteenth century.

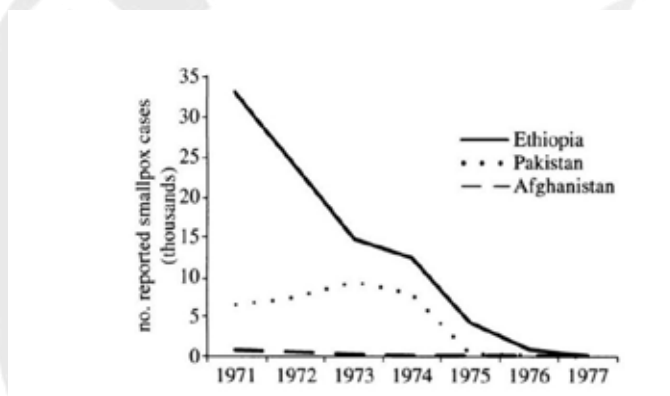


Figure 1: Number of reported smallpox cases from 1971 to 1977 in three endemic countries- Ethiopia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan- during the intensified eradication programme.⁸

In 1853, the English government started a law that included the compulsory vaccination of the people in London. At the same time, during 1853, The Anti Vaccination League was formed. In *The Evils of Vaccination, with a Protest Against Its Legal Enforcement*, George Gibbs protested the compulsory nature as well as the safety and efficacy of the vaccine itself.⁷ Today the movement of anti-vaccination is still very similar to what Gibbs had protested.

Before the period of the Covid-19 pandemic there were rumours about vaccines are causing autism, or they contained some sort of technological device in them that let people in higher positions control the others. But if we look into the core of these

arguments we can see the echoes that emerged from the argument of Gibbs. Because the main point where opposers of vaccinations state that the vaccines are 'not that effective nor safe'.

IV. Discussion of the Topic

A. Vaccine-Preventable Disease Awareness

The disappearance of a disease from the public eye creates an illusion as if there was no such disease in the public eye. So, with this, the seriousness of the disease becomes less and less known in the society and this causes a fall out of the cultural memory as generations pass without experiencing and the severity of the disease.⁸ Especially with the sudden start of the pandemic, these types of diseases have become more visible to the human eye again. With the flashbacks of the previous pandemics and epidemics, people started to be more alert to the COVID-19 process. At first, there was controversy on the usage of masks. People first rejected the usage of the masks saying they were causing carbon dioxide poisoning or they were just useless. After a while, especially after the announcement of the first vaccine people started to have complicated thoughts about vaccines. The arguments of vaccines containing electronic devices inside and the thought of vaccines are not safe to have become a hot topic of this period. Before the pandemic, the thoughts on the vaccines were similar to this period. The main points of the arguments were vaccines being 'unsafe' or them being 'mandatory'.

1. The Role of Culture

The impact of culture on society is a well-known truth. As well as communicating about the diseases and their effects on individuals is a part of the culture of that society. But it becomes a hard task when this communication is made between the vaccine-hesitant parents.

Cultural memory also creates a form of public anxiety. This anxiety can show itself in various forms. Since we do not see or hear any cases resulting in death actively such as polio, a vaccine-hesitant parent, who has never faced a threat from a VPD, would be less likely to get information and prevention from that disease. On the other hand, a parent who is also vaccine-hesitant could look up any information about vaccines and they would be more open to false information on vaccines.

2. The Role of Media

With the expansion of mass media, it has become easier and easier to reach any kind of information or news. Since the media has this much of an effect on an individual, news and information about health could affect their thoughts easily. Television coverage of influenza-related reports increases annual vaccination rates by up to 7.9 percent among the elderly.¹⁰ Conversely, anti-vaccination campaigns are linked with decreased vaccine uptake among children whose families are likely to have been exposed.¹¹

The obstacle of VPD awareness and media is, whenever a disease has an increase in its mortality rate so does the media coverage increases.¹² These can be done by giving the wrong numbers of mortality or not even speaking about that disease. In a place where VPD is no longer a threat, media coverage on its severity -and therefore, on the immunization- may also be lacking.

B. Vaccine Decision-making and Vaccine Refusal

1. Religious and Cultural Aspects

To understand one of the reasons behind objection to vaccination is to understand the moral and religious aspects. For example, in some of the countries vaccinations were rejected because they weren't religiously appropriate. Such as the accusations of vaccines containing elements extracted from non-halal ingredients like pigs, etc.¹³

After 14 years without endemic polio, the Netherlands reported an outbreak of poliomyelitis between 1992 and 1993¹⁴. These cases were largely restricted to a religious population among the society, while no evidence was found of poliovirus circulation outside these mentioned groups.¹⁵

2. Passive Refusal

In passive refusal, the parent with vaccine hesitancy would come up with excuses like their child is unable to be vaccinated because they are little, ill, or sleeping rather than giving an explicit objection towards the vaccine.¹⁶ By doing so the vaccine-hesitant parent is not only doing this because of the social, religious, or cultural norms but also the worldwide refusal of the vaccine.

3. Concerns about the safety of the Vaccine

When an individual is coming across with a vaccine they tend to look at its negative effects rather than the positive ones. In a case where the MMR vaccine and its link with autism emerged, parents, who are vaccine-hesitant decision making were greatly affected by this controversy. Parents who refuse the MMR vaccine are also less likely to believe that vaccines are necessary to protect their children.¹⁷

Even before the usage of the vaccine, it is being tested on voluntary people to see any kinds of side effects that may occur on people. This number of volunteers may differ from 20-100 and even thousands. These tests may take years to reach an answer to these kinds of questions:

- Is the vaccine safe?
- What dose (amount) works best?
- How does the immune system react to it?¹⁹

C. Approaches to decrease the vaccine refusal

1. Social Campaigns

Social campaigns tend to use more face-to-face activities where the community members have the chance to interact and communicate with each other or with a professional health member. Social campaign strategies can increase awareness towards VPD along with knowledge of vaccines. Understanding how vaccines work is a must to decrease the opposition towards them. These social campaigns need active participation to create a better outcome.

2. Monitoring and Surveillance

To see inside the society where there is opposition to vaccination, monitoring could be a way of uncovering the numbers of the opposers. Currently existing surveillance systems such as The Vaccine Confidence Project¹⁸ may serve as the foundations for the upcoming monitoring systems.

V. Expectations of The Academic Team

With the developing technology of vaccines, preventable diseases are increasing day by day. But these efforts would not come to an end until the whole society gains immunization. To understand and emphasize the opposers of the vaccines, their religious, cultural, and social aspects must be understood. With the right knowledge among the society, the vaccines will play a big part for the main objective of WHO “the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health”¹. With the decrease in opposition to the vaccines, some effects such as humanitarian and financial benefits in society would occur.

The academic team suggests delegates address these concerns in their resolutions:

- Should there be more strict implementations for the individuals who refuse to get their compulsory or the compulsory vaccines of their children?
- What can be done to decrease the obstacles related to religion, culture, and socio-economic life? ,
- How can the safety of the vaccines be explained to the individuals? What kinds of steps should be taken?
- What should be the main step of the World Health Organisation for the understanding of what a vaccine is among the opposers of vaccines?
 - a. Should it be a campaign?
 - b. Which part of the society will it address? The elderly, the middle-aged class, the teenagers and children or the whole society?

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