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Immunity to measles in COVID-19 era

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KEYWORDS COVID-19; measles; vaccine; uptake; hesitancy

The letter to the Editor “Measles vaccine uptake and COVID-19”¹ commenting on our recent paper “Measles vaccine uptake among Italian medical students compared to the pre-COVID-19 era”² raises concerns about some potential limitations of our findings. The authors comment that the retrospective-based approach used in the study may have introduced limitations such as constraints on data accuracy, completeness, and potential bias. In addition, the applicability of our findings to other settings or health care areas would be limited because only one teaching hospital was included in the study.

First, we would like to emphasize that the study is based on data from reliable sources, such as personal information, laboratory results and official vaccination records, which were previously collected by the Occupational Health Department through a rigorous verification process, in accordance with Italian law. Therefore, it is unlikely that the data collection methodology could have led to inaccuracies or misleading results.

Second, although conducted in a single university hospital, our study included a relatively large sample of medical students, and indeed our findings are consistent with those of similar studies from different EU and non-EU countries.^{3,4} In the current epidemiological picture, vaccination policy in response to changing epidemiology is a critical component of public health. According to a recent paper evaluating measles status and vaccine policy development in six European countries, mandatory vaccination has effectively increased childhood measles vaccination coverage in Italy, and similar benefits could be expected from vaccine mandates in other countries.⁵

Vaccine hesitancy among healthcare workers remains a major public health issue; interventions targeting future medical operators and addressing student vaccine hesitancy and knowledge gaps are critical.

Author’s contribution

Cristiana Ferrari was involved in revising the paper critically for intellectual content and the final approval of the version to be published; Giuseppina Somma was involved in drafting of the paper and revising it critically for intellectual content; Luca Coppeta was involved in conception and design and drafting of the paper. All authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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