

Impact on COVID-19 on the work package four

Work package four is currently drafting the study documents for the second project which concerns the healthcare professionals. Two studies will take place: 1) an interview study to explore the perspective of healthcare workers on older adult vaccination and their information seeking behavior regarding vaccination and 2) a network analysis to gain insight in the network surrounding healthcare workers concerning their information seeking behavior with regards to vaccination. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is highly unlikely to include any healthcare workers for these studies. We hope, with an extension of at least 6 months, the study can start at a later stage. In the meantime, all study documents will be prepared and ready and approvals from the different Medical Ethical Committees will be obtained so the inclusion of participants can start as soon as possible. To make this process as much as possible, questions that might take a compressive evaluation of the Medical Ethical Committee will be taken out of the topic list and questionnaires. The inclusion will take us approximately one month. With interviewing healthcare workers by phone instead of face-to-face, we hope to facilitate inclusion.

This study among healthcare workers gives us the opportunity to explore the perspective of healthcare workers on vaccinating against COVID-19, for both themselves and older adults and their information needs when a new vaccine is introduced. So, extra questions will be added to the topic list and questionnaire. This will provide valuable insight, in a real time manner, on how to facilitate healthcare workers in these pandemic situations.

If it turns out that this study cannot be conducted at all, we are dependent on literature. However, a quick-and-dirty search showed that there aren't a lot of articles on the information seeking behavior of healthcare professionals or their networks. Therefore it is in the best interest of the project that these studies can be conducted.

Additional COVID-19 related activities

For work package four, we would like to propose two additional COVID related activities. First, together with work package 2, we would like to explore potential changes in the healthcare seeking behavior of the older adults by adding a questionnaire to the data collection of work package two. Due to the high workload in hospitals because of the COVID-pandemic, most regular care has been postponed in for example the Netherlands. However, from earlier data collected in work package 4, older adults are also in contact with healthcare workers outside of the hospital. Therefore, it would be valuable to explore what the impact is of the COVID-19 pandemic on the healthcare seeking behavior of older adults. This can identify potential shifts in the healthcare use of older adults during infectious disease pandemics to map capacity needs.

The second additional activity we would like to propose are additional focus groups. In the first year of work package four we conducted a focus group study to explore the perspective of older adult on vaccination and identify their information needs. One of the arguments to accept vaccination was the severity of the disease and one of the arguments to decline vaccination was the perceived susceptibility. With the present COVID pandemic, views on vaccination might have changed or be more pronounced, looking at the higher mortality and prevalence rates among elderly specifically for COVID-19. By conducting additional focus groups, we would like to explore the perspective on vaccination of older adults again to identify possible changes. And more importantly, to provide input for the information provision for older adults during such an infectious disease outbreak and improve communication.

Due to earlier difficulties recruiting participants, using panels would be a quick way to organize these focus groups. However, this will require extra budget of €15000. The feasibility of conducting additional focus groups in Hungary, France and Italy and the additional costs have yet to be determined.