INTRODUCTION

Health and social care workers (HSCWs) have an essential role in the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccination has long been an emotionally charged issue and perceptions of risk associated with COVID-19 can contribute towards vaccine hesitancy (VH). The aim of this study was to explore psychosocial factors associated with HSCWs’ uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination.

DESIGN

A cross-sectional survey design using Qualtrics during the mass vaccination period in Scotland (Dec-March 2021). A multi-method approach to analysis was adopted.

METHODS

An online survey was conducted with HSCWs (N = 1189) aged 18 to 67 years (M = 44.09 yrs, SD = 11.48) during the third lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data relating to socio-demographical characteristics, vaccine uptake and intent, emotions associated with the vaccine and risk perception was collected. Open-ended free text data was also collected relating to HSCWs’ views on the COVID-19 vaccine.

RESULTS

VH was prevalent in 16.03% of the sample of HSCWs. There was no significant association between health and social care occupational groups and VH ($X^2 (2, N = 956) = 2.4, p = .123$).

HSCWs who were VH associated more negative emotions with the vaccine, had lower scores on COVID-19 risk perception and less years of experience working in health and social care settings.

Years of experience was a predictor of VH; that is HSCWs with less years of experience in their working role were more likely to be VH.

Positive emotions predicted VH, that is HSCWs who reported positive emotions associated with the COVID-19 vaccine were less likely to be VH. The regression model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 27.402, p < .0005$. The model explained 8.8% of the variance in VH and correctly classified 84.2% of cases.

Content analysis of HSCWs’ reasons for VH included safety concerns, worries about side effects, questioning the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccine, lack of evidence and information about the vaccine (see table 1).

DISCUSSION

This study is the first in Scotland to detail factors associated with COVID-19 VH among HSCWs’ during the roll out of mass vaccination.

The findings suggest that, to increase vaccine coverage in HSCWs, the role of emotion and risk perception in communication strategies to address VH is crucial; this needs to be tailored to the requirements of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Targeting interventions to HSCWs who are less experienced in their working roles, given they are more likely to be VH is recommended.

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