

# **Romanian Association for Pediatric Education in Family Medicine (AREPMF) activity report about the development and implementation of National Communication Campaign regarding prevention for high vital risk infectious diseases re-emergency in Romania.**

**National strategic Romanian project dedicated for all UE citizens health protection.**

## **Case study**

### **I. Background**

Starting with 2008-2013 period, Romania has been facing major difficulties ensuring the vaccination of the pediatric population, pregnant woman, elderly population, high risk groups. In 20 November 2014, **AREPMF**, formed a special group of interest in Vaccination field: **Vaccine Advocacy Group**. This group's destiny is to advocate, to counsel, medical staff (GP's Team, HCP with interest in the vaccination activity and infectious diseases prevention), Civil Society members, large population.

First step: identification and correct evaluation of the epidemiologic situation that we are confronted with in Romania and all around Europe.

Step two: barriers assessment in vaccination process. In Romania are multiple causes that have reduced the vaccine coverage below the safety limits of 95% (WHO recommendation):

1. Parent's declining confidence in public health policies and subsidiary, in the decisions of the HCP (health care professionals)
2. Online campaigns that spread anti-vaccination messages, repeatedly Media promotion of a negative image of the doctor in the society
3. Vaccine supply discontinuity and unannounced frequent changes in the National Immunisation Program (NIP)
5. Migration of the population / cross-border population,
6. Ethnic minorities hard to cover or isolated communities not covered by medical staff,
7. Excessive bureaucratization of the medical primary care system,
8. Lack of firm legislation, protective for children's health,
9. Lack of permanent National Education Campaigns to bring to the attention of civil society the benefits of vaccination and the risks to which the entire population is exposed in the absence of protection obtained by correct and complete immunization in the face of extremely serious diseases,
10. Underestimated, but very serious threat, for short and long term- the drastic numerical reduction of medical staff in the area of pediatric practice of family medicine.

With a background of vaccination coverage below 80%, a measles outbreak was triggered in April 2016. In June 2017 in Romania they are already 31 deaths amongst 7282 cases of measles. In this context, family physicians involved in the vaccination process confront with many problems needing to be solved, before the measles rapid extension, strike the other European countries.

### **II. Action Proposed**

1. Summarizing the facts and making a risk analysis for short and long term, regarding the non-vaccinated population health evolution, AREPMF as medical professional Association involved in the child health protection process, decided to prepare, to develop and implement, a National Communication Campaign dedicated for raising the awareness level and educating the population about the benefits of vaccination and the risks of non-vaccination (**purpose**).

2. The chosen **Campaign messages**: "Vaccination- a right to equal chances. Romanian children are also European children..." and "Vaccination saves lives-Science and Time, proven facts", express two unfulfilled painful realities: in 2007, the main condition for Romania to be part of the UE, from the Health system point of view, was connected with the primary care and the infectious diseases prevention. None has been resolved entirely until 2017. The campaign was generated to be from start **permanent, patient centered action**, with a

major social component and determined desire, to implement benefic change not just for the Romanian population, but also to prevent, to protect, European citizen from a severe outbreak of infectious diseases.

**3. General Objective-** Increasing vaccine coverage from 80% in 2017 to 90% in 2020 for vaccines provided in the National Immunization Program in Romania

**4. Specific Objectifs :**The Campaign provides to participants access to professional medical information delivered in an usual language, for each target groups, according with his/her educational level, looking:

I. Proven facts of Science and Time

1. The history of epidemics of infectious diseases with severe evolution

2. History of vaccination and vaccines.

II. Vaccination in Romania

1. National Immunization Program (NIP) and Vaccination for the Risk Groups / Special Situations

2. Alternative / Optional Immunisation

III. Particularities of the vaccine process in Romania

1. Barriers in the immunisation process in Romania

2. Sustainable measures to increase vaccination coverage to 95% (WHO recommendation)

**5. Project partners**

A. HCP (GP Team= doctors + nurses)

B. Civic Association / Parents in charge / Educational Institutions / Policy makers

c. Media

**6. Beneficiaries of the project / target group**

A. HCP (GP Team= doctors + nurses)

B. Civic Association / Parents in charge / Educational Institutions / Policy makers

c. Media

**7. Campaign Visual identity-attached logo**

**8. Institutional partners:** Pediatric Romanian Society, Social Pediatric Society, Romanian Society of Microbiology, Medical College of Bucharest, The Romanian Association for Education in Hypertension, The Health Commission of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, Red Cross, Save the Children, World Vision

**III. Methodology**

The campaign preparation and development, requested some mandatory steps centered in the first place by active crisis communication, adult education methods, raising awareness into the large population.

Campaign included: Press Releases, Debates, Press conferences at the beginning and end of the campaign; Online posts, dedicated Website to the campaign, promote our messages on significant calendar days for the community, printing of posters, flyers, brochures, calendars, writing pens, booklets, caps and shirts with the logo.etc

In order the most significant methods that we applied to develop the Campaign:

1. Presidential Administration of Romania DEBATE "EDUCATION FOR HEALTH", Cotroceni Palace, Unirii Hall, November 26, 2015

- › With the support of the Mme. Conf. Dr Diana Paun, State Counselor, Department of Public Health.  
[http://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Raport\\_educatie\\_pentru\\_sanatate\\_19\\_ian\\_2016.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Raport_educatie_pentru_sanatate_19_ian_2016.pdf)

## 2. Senat Press Release-

Theme – “Vaccination - equal opportunities for health "Romanian children are European children to..." - June 22, 2015 Dr. Valeria Herdea, President of the Romanian Association for Pediatric Education of Family Physicians, initiator of the event and coordinator of the AREPMF Vaccine Advocacy Group:

"It is the right of every child to have equal chances for health. Children in Romania are European children to and must benefit from protection schemes against infectious diseases that can be prevented by vaccination like all children in the EU. One of the solutions to reducing inequities is to develop unified European vaccination programs. "

During the debate, priority measures were taken to improve the implementation of the state health policies in relation to the risk of epidemics. Presenting the issues and the sustainable solutions from the perspective of the most important specialists in the field, decision makers, opinion leaders, media representatives, patients and parents have been the strength of this interactive work session”. Prof dr IOn Luchian, President of the Senate Public Health Commission: "When the vaccination rate falls below 80 percent, for several years in a row, there are epidemics; Spending grows, and a number of sick people are losing their chance of healing. Only in Bucharest the vaccination rate dropped by 20 percent in 2014 compared to 2013.

Vaccination against measles, mumps and rubella fell to below 80 percent in some areas of the country in 2014. For example, in Bucharest, the vaccination rate was 78.3 percent in 2014, compared to 97.4 percent in 2014.

The rate of anti-tetanus-pertussis vaccination was 75 percent in 2014, compared to 95.9 percent in 2013. In this context, I believe that a law is needed to establish the actors responsible for the distribution chain And supply of vaccines in Romania "<https://www.senat.ro/StiriSenatDetaliu.aspx?ID=CC3021D0-9094-445A-B655-5C83222DC044>

**3. Press release post Government announcement-**21 september 2016-at that moment Romania has three child who died of confirm measles and 675 cases.” On 21 September, the Ministry of Health declared a measles epidemic in the country, making public the number of cases of confirm measles in Romania this year (675), as well as the fact that 3 of these cases led to the death of patients. AREPMF expresses its deep concern over the epidemiological situation in Romania. It is extremely sad to lose innocent children's lives in the 21st century. Children need to be protected against the risk of disease by preventing infectious diseases by vaccination. Understanding the gravity of the situation can and must lead to the adoption of rapid, effective, long-term preventive measures.

The main issues we are facing are:

The dramatic decrease in vaccine coverage in Romania, well below the 95% protection threshold recommended by the WHO.

The risk of re-emergence of severe infectious diseases, considered eradicated

The population's declining adherence to preventive measures in the health sector in general and, in particular, in the field of vaccination, despite the increased educational efforts undertaken by health professionals in recent years... AREPMF is constantly striving to improve the quality of life of patients by promoting health-based prevention programs and health education among the population.”

**4. Press Conference main theme:** Vaccination-a fundamental right to health with the Bucharest Medical College, involving personalities of the medical world with interest in the prevention of life-threatening infectious diseases and NGO who fight in the field of child health protection. 5.

#### **5. Government task force for solutions to the vaccine crisis 12 may 2017**

” At Friday's working meeting at Victoria Palace, Professor Alexandru Rafila, president of the Romanian Society of Microbiology (SRM), also participated; Dr. Sandra Alexiu, Vice-President of the National Family Medicine Society; Dr. Gindrovel Dumitra, Head of the Vaccinology Group of the National Society of Family Physicians (SNMF); Prof. Dr. Adrian Streinu-Cercel, Manager of the National Institute of Infectious Diseases "Matei Bals"; Dr. Valeria Herdea, President of the Romanian Association for Pediatric Education in Family Medicine (AREMPF); Dr. Oana Falup-Pecurariu, Member of the Braşov Children's Hospital Hospital; Dr. Miljana Grbic from the World Health Organization (WHO); Dr. Anca Draganescu, President of the Pro Immunization Association; Ana Măita from the Mother Mother's Association, Dr. Adriana Pistol, Vice-President of the Romanian Society for Epidemiology and Director of the National Center for Transmissible Diseases Control and Control within the National Institute of Public Health (INSP) and Borbora Koo, UNICEF Specialist on Health area.<https://www.agerpres.ro/politica/2017/05/12/premierul-grindeanu-a-solicitat-constituirea-unui-grup-operativ-la-nivelul-guvernului-pentru-solutii-la-criza-vaccinurilor-15-20-38>

#### **Internal audiences**

##### **Urban area Debates/Conferences**

1. February 2016 Large Medical Public Debates / Parents associations / Civil Society representatives, Parliament, Government, WHO, UNICEF representative

[http://dr.herdea.ro/medicale/197/vaccinarea\\_un\\_drept\\_fundamental\\_la\\_sanatate\\_comunicat\\_de\\_presa](http://dr.herdea.ro/medicale/197/vaccinarea_un_drept_fundamental_la_sanatate_comunicat_de_presa)

##### **Rural area Debates/ Round tables**

1. Rural area Education Campaign in partnership with the Medicine University Carol Davila, Bucharest. The 2014-2016 Campaign "Together for Rural Health" – involving students, resident doctors, specialists, academics. (7 caravans 2013-2015 (33 in total) Total patients - about 1500, Medical staff: report 1 specialist: 5 student, Cervical Cancer Detected: 6, Breast Cancer Detected: 4)

2. Cumpana, Constanta- Round table-Prevention of the cervical cancer, 2015-2016 Education Information, Awareness

##### **On-line interventions/Lobby and Vaccine Advocacy action**

1. Website: [www.arepmf.ro](http://www.arepmf.ro)

2. Website: [www.vaccinare.org](http://www.vaccinare.org)

3. [www.herdea.ro](http://www.herdea.ro)

4. [www.hardmed.ro](http://www.hardmed.ro)

##### **New Media. Social Media methods**

##### **Questionnaire**

1. HCP- –evaluating attitude toward vaccination among HCP, 2015:

Information and awareness campaign on the risks induced by vaccination and the benefits of vaccination  
<https://arepmf.ro/anunt-incheiere-cestionar-pregatire-campanie-informare-vaccinare-etapa-i/>

## **On-line posts:**

[Vaccinarea salveaza vieti - Vaccinare.org - YouTube](#)

[Vaccinare.org - Home | Facebook](#)

<https://vaccinare.org/categorie/articole-parinti/page/2/>

## **External audiences**

### **1. AREPMF Participation in international scientific events**

a. ESPID –European Society for Pediatric Infectious Diseases Dublin, Ireland, 2014-paper work The impact of the respiratory tract infection in GP’s practice.Observational study 2008-2013

b. “From package to protection: how do we close global coverage gaps to optimize the impact of vaccination?”22-24 September 2014 Anney, Franta 2014, Valeria Herdea, AREPMF

c. 20 mai 2015 - Pediatrics 2015 San Antonio, USA

Parents' Refusal to Vaccinate Their Children: An Increasing Social Phenomenon Which Threatens Public Health, Liliana Barbacariu, Iasi, AREPMF

d. Vaccine Advocacy –the bridge between vaccine refusal and social norme awarenessWorld Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians. Wonca Istanbul, 2015

e. Vaccine advocacy the bridge between disease and health, ESPID –European Society for Pediatric Infectious Diseases Brighton, UK, 2016

f. Guidelines for immunization practice in family physician’s office ESPID –European Society for Pediatric Infectious Diseases Madrid, 2017

### **Campaign Brochure**

Responsible parents informations/ Messages for parents

Vaccinate your kid/Listen to the medical advices/Child has the right to be protected/ Serach correct medical informations from dedicated specialist/Immunisation save lifes/We care about our kids?

(with the support of Innovation civic Found and the partnership of the Medical College of Bucharest and Romania Microbiology Society)-give to more than 1000 parents, educators, teachers, students)

### **Teaching in Schools**

Children education in primary and High Scool from Bucharest-Young doctors Educational Campaign

### **Information and Counseling Center about Vaccinations and Vaccines**

-on-going project-component of the project “Vaccination-a fundamental right for health”, with the support of Innovation civic Found and the partnership of the Medical College of Bucharest and Romania Microbiology Society-more than 500 parents, educators, students

### **Journalistic activity**

Under co-ordination Romanian Association for Pediatric Education in Family Medicine we developed the project **Medic Ro Journal 2014-2016**

Ethics in medical journalism

Perhaps the word on paper, to influence the evolution of a society for the better?

### **Workshops dedicated to Health Professionals, Educational Grant 2016-2017**

Carried out in eight regions of the country:

Bistrita Team -Simona Rus, Egri Eduard, Emiliana Costiug

Iasi Team - Liliana Barbacariu, Oana Temneanu, Otilia Novac

Galati Team- Ileana Brinza, Liliana Chitanu, Valeria Herdea

Bucuresti Team - Raluca Ghionaru, Laura Herdea, Valeria Herdea

Pitesti Team - Carmen Mirauta, Raluca Ghionaru, Herdea Valeria

Craiova Team - Ileana Brinza, Liliana Chitanu, Valeria Herdea

Tg Mures Team - Monica Puscas, Andreea Varga, Emiliana Costiug

Cluj Team - Emiliana Costiug, Claudia Pop, Ioan Muresan, Iustina Ardelean

## **International Medical Media e- journals**

### **09.11.2016 Garry Finnegan Vaccines Today**

“The spread of pseudoscience and ‘gossip’ through the media is a major challenge to public health, according Dr Valeria Herdea, President of **AREPMF**, a professional medical organisation committed to educating paediatricians. Her organisation has been touring the country working with GPs to communicate with parents about the need for immunization.

“We still have in the media, gossip shows with different celebrities of dubious taste, who provide all kind of ‘magic methods’ for child immunity, without vaccination, but who capture public attention much more than scientific information,” she told Vaccines Today. This is increasing the percentage of those who became suddenly anti-vaccination or at least hesitant.”

<https://www.vaccinestoday.eu/stories/romania-measles-outbreak-may-be-tip-of-the-iceberg/>

### **AREPMF Professional Internal Medical Audiences**

1. Romanian Association for Pediatric Education in Family Medicine organised between February 27 to March 1, 2015 the First National Conference-Vaccination-past and present in Romania

2. National Conference AREPMF Days – Sovata 2015- Classic and modern in Vaccinology

### **Messages:**

Evidence -based medicine, best advocacy in prevention

My individual Freedom ends where the violation of your right to Freedom, Security and Life begins

Freedom is the necessity of understanding

You can not be really free than respecting the fundamental rights of others and understanding the value of social norms

3. Romanian Association for Pediatric Education in Family Medicine National Conference, 2016

Vaccine Advocacy- family doctor is the patient counselor, doctor – patient team

4. Conference dedicated to Prematurity 1819 nov 2016

5. Romanian Association for Pediatric Education in Family Medicine National Conference, 2017

Workshop Vaccine Advocacy – special guest Prof. Dr. Alexandru Rafila, SRM

Main topic:

Presentation Vaccination Guidelin: Guidelines for immunization practice in family physician’s office

Current challenges of National Immunization Programm. Meales epidemic. Vaccination recovery

## **Medical Book Editing**

Guidelines for immunization practice in family physician's office- 2 editions in 2017(February 2017 and in maj 2017 up-dated edition)-1000 books.

The criteria for investing in a classical medical book: In Romania GP's with interest and involvement in the field of pediatric care, have an average age over 45 years, so they are mostly familiar with the print and less for the e-learning.

In preparation a third edition –e-learning type (By the web site of [www.arepmf.ro](http://www.arepmf.ro))

In preparation the Parents Guidelines for Immunisation.

The Guideline cover the practical needs of the GP from all around the country, including theoretical and practical aspects of vaccination process from actualized professional information to real -life practical elements in the GP's office, from bureaucratic challenges to patient centered care and interpersonal communication requirement. We dedicate this work to GP's, knowing the problems they are facing with. An important part refers to the vaccine adverse effects reporting system (VAERS) and the efficient management for the possible emergency cases that may occur during the vaccination process (GP's emergency kit).

They are a special part, dedicated to improvement of the communication skills between GP's team and patient, GP's team and patient family/relatives worries/concernes. The Guideline is not a book about presenting problems that may occur in the vaccination process, **is a Book about Sustainable Solutions available for every GP's**. In the last 6 years in Romania we don't have such complex and innovative educational resources, dedicated to entire vaccination process from the GP's office.

## **Vaccine Advocacy Actions**

### **1. Open letter to policy makers January 2017**

...”We bring to your attention a very worrying situation from the point of view of the primary medicine practitioner - the base of medical assistance in Romania...” “Please provide support to find a solution to these high risk national safety health care issue:

- simplify and speed up at the Ministry of Health the vaccine acquisition procedures
- continuous flow of vaccine supply
- vaccines supply prevision for minimum 4 years
- vaccines supply to allow differential vaccine recovery according the ages
- simplifying bureaucratic procedures for vaccine acquisition and reporting.

### **2.Lobby and advocacy for the Vaccination Law 2015-2017**

- activities that involve Media, NGO, Educational Institution,
- Policy makers

-National Institute of Magistracy regarding the respect for civil right of the patient, especially the child right to be protected against abuse.

## **Main Barriers identified in Communication Campaign preparation**

### **Doctor-patient relationship:**

- trust, traditional family values, education, language, distance, time, ethnicity.

## **GP team- third parties relationship**

Deficient Curriculum and training in Efficient Communication HCP - patient

The decline of the population's trust in the decisions of the medical body

Communication deficiency inside medical system

Extreme Bureaucracy imposed to the medical system detrimental for doctor- patient relationship

Resilience and difficult implementation of modern working methods.

Lack of specialized Medical Media

The HCP-Pharma relationship, under the constant suspicion

Prohibited Conditions for Accessing EU Projects for NGOs

The difficult sustainability of medium and long term projects

Difficult Collaboration with State Authorities

## **IV. Results**

### **Internal expected results**

1. Optimizing health policies in preventing the risk, for re-emergency of severe infectious diseases by vaccination. Coherent legislation consistent with the realities in Romania.
2. National Communication Campaign dedicated to population education for the prevention of infectious diseases and awareness on the role of vaccination in the prevention of these diseases.
3. Implementing the National Health Education Program at all levels of school.
4. Until 2020 we expected to have an increase vaccination coverage to 90% all around the country, by raising vaccine confidence of the large population ( Permanent Patient Centered Communication Campaign)
5. Implementing and Monitoring good standard practice in GP's offices according with international guidelines

### **External expected results**

1. Raising the trust and collaboration in health domain, between EU states, to develop mutual common health policies, dedicated to protect their citizens.
2. Transferability of succes working models between countries in the field of prevention (cooperation between policy makers and medicals)
3. Innovative type of medical practice exchanges between GP's from different countries
4. Extended protection for all people in EU states by fast medical information exchanges channels (via internet secure system), medical alert system, regarding vaccine preventable diseases.
5. Intersectorial collaboration: between Medical Profesional NGO, at regional and national level(networking tool), regarding the scientific acquisition, innovation medical technique and the most important, sharing experience between GP specialists, periodic external trainings, from basic knowledge to top medical information, being the only way to equalize the expansion of medical information in all UE countries.

## **Conclusions: Final Messages**



**1.** The diseases do not know anything about borders! There are no borders to stop sufferance, they are community of people with the same objectivs: promoting health of the dearest.

**2.** Facilitating the access of medical staff to high standards medical education, educating population of every country, implementing all around United Europe an UE Common Immunization Program, we can protect efficiently all Europe.

**3. Sharing information, facts, science, practice and common values we can save lives**