

## SUMMARY

**Introduction:** Parental hesitancy toward childhood vaccination represents a growing public health challenge, particularly amid social change, the intensification of misinformation, and the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Aim:** This dissertation aimed to identify and analyse the determinants of parental hesitancy toward childhood vaccination in Poland and to assess the role of medical professionals in the vaccination decision-making process.

**Methods:** A mixed-methods approach integrating qualitative and quantitative methods was employed. The qualitative component consisted of 33 individual semi-structured interviews with parents of children covered by the mandatory vaccination schedule, and the data were analysed thematically. The quantitative component comprised an anonymous online survey using the PACV scale, with 1,046 parents participating. Univariate and multivariate analyses, incorporating parametric and nonparametric tests, identified factors associated with vaccination attitudes.

**Results:** The qualitative analysis identified key domains shaping vaccine hesitancy, including concerns about vaccine safety, communication with medical professionals, trust in the vaccination schedule, subjective risk assessment based on comparisons between the perceived risk of infectious diseases and the risk of adverse events following vaccination, the presence of anti-system narratives, and organisational and financial barriers. In the quantitative study, most respondents expressed positive attitudes toward vaccination; however, a substantial proportion reported specific concerns, particularly regarding vaccine safety and the number of vaccines administered. Vaccination attitudes were significantly associated with selected sociodemographic factors, including employment status and work in the healthcare sector. Higher trust in the child's physician and in the vaccination schedule was associated with greater willingness to reconsider a previous decision to refuse vaccination.

**Conclusions:** The primary source of parental vaccine hesitancy is concern about vaccine safety, and medical professionals play a key role in shaping vaccination decisions. Pro-vaccination attitudes are more common among employed individuals and among healthcare workers. Vaccine refusal is not always permanent, and greater trust in physicians increases the likelihood of revising such decisions. The PACV scale is a valuable tool for identifying parents who require enhanced communication support.

**Keywords:** vaccine hesitancy; physician–parent communication; vaccine safety; trust in physicians; parental attitudes; vaccination decision-making.