Letter to the Editor

Could the adverse outcomes of “seasonal influenza” vaccination in South Korea have an effect on the COVID-19 pandemic?

Siukan Law 1*, Albert Wingnang Leung 2, Chuanshan Xu 3

1- Department of Science, School of Science and Technology, The Open University of Hong Kong, Ho Man Tin, Kowloon, Hong Kong.
2- School of Graduate Studies, Lingnan University, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong.
3- Key Laboratory of Molecular Target and Clinical Pharmacology, State Key Laboratory of Respiratory Disease, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences & Fifth Affiliated Hospital, Guangzhou Medical University, Guangzhou 511436, China.

LETTER INFO

Letter history:
Received 3 October 2020
Received in revised form 5 November 2020
Accepted 5 November 2020

Keywords:
Seasonal influenza
COVID-19 outbreak
Flu vaccine

Dear Editor

Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease that is difficult to differentiate from influenza symptoms. The COVID-19 pandemic has not yet finished and “seasonal influenza” will be coming from December to February. Several countries such as South Korea and Singapore are prepared for the “Flu” vaccination to minimize common influenza disease. The COVID-19 pandemic would become a “double attack” if most people didn’t not take the “Flu” vaccine in the winter of this year, also “seasonal influenza” might kill at least 3,000 South Koreans. It’s the same situation in other countries, people have a high risk of getting “Flu” as well as developing the COVID-19 complications, so they should be vaccinated with the seasonal influenza vaccine for prevention.

Nonetheless, there is another issue that occurred in South Korea. According to the South Korean Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) report, at least 59 people died after injection of the “Flu” vaccine [1]. Why did this happen? Did any safety issues appear in the vaccine? The “Flu” vaccine has been proven to be safe with rare side effects such as people may get Guillain-Barré Syndrome causing muscle weakness and paralysis [2] which is around one in a million chance. It is very rare for anyone to have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). People died after getting “Flu” vaccine shots, they were 60 years old or above with pre-existing health symptoms including hypertension, heart disease, stroke, respiratory diseases, and diabetes.

Around five million doses of the “Flu” vaccine in South Korea have been disposed of as they were not stored at the recommended temperature [3]. The “Flu” vaccine is a sensitive bio-active substance that is easily degraded, loses potency, and effectiveness when temperatures are too cold or hot when directly exposed to the sunlight. The required temperatures range from +2°C to +8°C, otherwise, the “Flu” vaccine will be...
denatured. These conditions are cumulative, permanent, and irreversible. Therefore, “Flu” vaccine storage and transportation methods are also important to prevent its properties from being changed[4].

We believe that the “seasonal influenza” will have the effect of exacerbating COVID-19 cases. Because of the bad news massages received about the flu vaccination, also would like to point out that policymakers should pay close attention to this aspect and deal with anti-vaccination campaigns. Prevention is better than cure, so it is intense for those in need to vaccinate with the “Flu” vaccine as the mortality rate of seasonal “Flu” is much higher than COVID-19. The “Flu” vaccine injection program must go-on, otherwise, “seasonal influenza” will become another serious outbreak.

Author contributions
All authors contributed to the concept, acquisition, and analysis of data, drafting of the article, and critical revision for important intellectual content.

Conflicts of interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Funding/support: The authors received no funding source/grants or other materials support for this work.

References


3-Reuters. South Korea urges people to get flu shots, trust its steps on health. 26 Oct 2020.