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## ЭТИКО-СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ОЦЕНКА ОТНОШЕНИЯ К ВАКЦИНАЦИИ В МОЛОДЕЖНОЙ СРЕДЕ РОССИИ

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**Аннотация.** Затянувшаяся пандемия COVID-19 на фоне дефицита государственных ресурсов в сфере здравоохранения вызвала волну псевдонаучной информации в интернет-пространстве. Особенно подвержена такому влиянию молодежная среда, коммуникация в которой носит характер информационного хаоса. Для оценки отношения к вакцинации в молодежной среде России проведено социологическое исследование, N = 480, средний возраст – (20,8 ± 1,41) года. Согласно полученным данным, 36,71 % респондентов категорически против личной вакцинации. В то же время только 65,71 % студентов, давших отрицательный ответ, смогли объяснить свою позицию. Полученные результаты демонстрируют тенденцию к формированию в молодежной среде социально негативной моды – «вакцин-диссидентов». Проведен сравнительный анализ по проблеме отношения к вакцинированию в странах Европы. Рассмотрены официальные механизмы, предлагаемые ВОЗ для достижения справедливого доступа к вакцинам, в частности на примере Декларации о равном доступе к вакцинированию 2021 г. Показано, в чем заключается принципиальная разница – стигматизация невакцинированных за рубежом может быть спровоцирована неравенством к доступу вакцин, а не является протестным проявлением инфодемии, как среди молодежи России. В связи с этим возрастает востребованность социолого-психологического сопровождения профессионального образования, где в условиях образовательной среды представляются наиболее реальными и социологический мониторинг, и нравственно-психологическая коррекция. В таких условиях возрастает востребованность гуманитарного образования в медицинских вузах, позволяющего ориентировать на этические нормы и нравственные ценности профессии в рамках учебного процесса.

**Ключевые слова:** пандемия, вакцинирование, биоэтика, социальные группы

Original article

## ETHICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF ATTITUDES TO VACCINATION IN THE YOUTH ENVIRONMENT OF RUSSIA

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**Abstract.** The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic on the background of a shortage of state resources in the healthcare sphere, caused a wave of pseudoscientific information in the Internet. The youth environment is particularly susceptible to such influence, communication in which has the character of information chaos. To assess the attitude to vaccination in the youth environment of Russia, a sociological study was conducted, N = 480, average age (20.8 ± 1.41). According to the data obtained, 36.71 % of respondents are categorically against personal vaccination. At the same time, only 65.71 % of students who gave a negative answer were able to explain their position. The obtained results demonstrate a tendency to the formation of a socially negative "fashion" among young people – "dissident-vaccines". It is shown that the fundamental difference is that the stigmatization of those who are

not vaccinated abroad can be provoked by inequality in access to vaccines, and not a protest manifestation of infodemia, as among young people of Russia. Because of this, the demand for socio-psychological support of vocational education is increasing, where in the conditions of the educational environment, sociological monitoring, moral and psychological correction seems to be the most realistic. In such conditions, the demand for humanitarian education in medical universities is increasing, which allow to focus on ethical norms and moral values of the profession within the educational process.

**Keywords:** pandemic, vaccination, bioethics, social groups

**Introduction.** The COVID-19 pandemic dictates more and more strict strategies of combat at the global level. Each wave of virus spreading is a new examination for the national health systems, citizens dissatisfaction with endless lockdowns and new restrictive measures by the state is growing. In the winter of 2021, when the third wave began in Europe and the UK, it became finally clear that the expectation of natural population immunity would lead to huge losses and irreversible economic changes. The World Health Organization has declared vaccination as a priority strategy in the fight against the pandemic.

On the 18th January 2021 a Declaration on the Equality of Vaccination appeared on the official website of WHO, in the preamble of which the Director-General of WHO, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted the importance, as well as the need to ensure the fairness of vaccination. Dr. Gebreyesus believes that achieving equitable access to vaccination is possible through the COVAX mechanism and the COVID 19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP), because international mechanisms for the exchange of know-how, rapid production of vaccines in large volumes are already exist. COVAX, which unites more than 190 countries, has already ensured the production of 2 billion doses of vaccines in 2021. While by mid-October 2020, more than 40 candidate vaccines were just undergoing clinical trials, more than 150 others vaccines were at more earlier stages. Out of the top 10 candidate vaccines, companies or research institutes with headquarters in China, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States participated in their development. The vaccines developed by Russian scientists were highly appreciated in the publications of the authoritative scientific publications "The Lancet" and "Nature", because on the June 2021 there is convincing evidence of the effectiveness and safety of the vaccine named "Sputnik-V".

At the same time, the overall coverage of vaccination among the population of Russia remains at an unacceptably

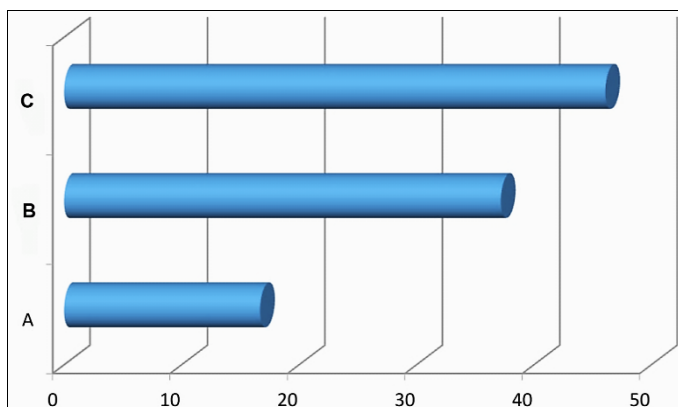
low level. The third wave led to an increase in cases in the age group from 18 to 48 years. This indicates a serious threat to young Russians who determine the labor, creative and defense potential of the country.

**The purpose** of the research is an ethical and sociological assessment of the attitude to vaccination in the youth environment of Russia.

**Materials and Methods.** The empirical basis of the research was the materials of a sociological survey of students of the Volgograd State Medical University, N = 480, average age is (20.8 ± 1.41). The author's questionnaire was examined in the Department of Ethical, Legal and Sociological Expertise in Medicine sphere of the Volgograd Medical Research Center (No. 27/I-2021). The standards of confidentiality and autonomy of respondents were observed. The preliminary colloquy with explanations of the purpose of the research, clarification of the questionnaire questions and methods of conducting were carried out in the format of an online conference (Zoom platform), a sociological survey was conducted by using Google forms.

Mathematical data processing was carried out by methods of variational statistics with the calculation of parametric (Student's t-criterion) criteria of difference using the Excel application software package for Windows 17.0.

**Results.** Our research showed that only every second respondent (61.41 %,  $p > 0.1$ ) clearly positively perceives vaccination as an effective strategy against COVID-19. 36.71 % of respondents are categorically against personal vaccination. At the same time, only 65.71 % of students who gave a negative answer were able to explain their position. Approximately the same results were obtained when distributing the respondents' answers to the question: "When do you plan to be vaccinated against COVID-19?" (Fig.).



**Fig. Distribution of respondents into groups depending on the attitude to personal vaccination.**

On the abscissa axis: the number of respondents in %, On the ordinate axis: groups of respondents: A – want to be vaccinated in the near future, B – do not exclude the possibility of vaccination after longer-term data on the absence of side effects, C – categorically deny any possibility of personal vaccination

The attitude of medical students to the introduction of so-called vaccination passports reflects more their civil rather than professional position ("covid-passports", QR codes, certificates and etc.), allowing to move abroad and access to public places, which have already been approved in the countries of the European Union, introduced in a number of countries of the Pacific region, and at the end of May 2021 integrated into the practice of visiting public places in Moscow.

According to the results of a survey conducted by us in March 2021, the majority of respondents (88.2 %,  $p < 0.01$ ) consider this approach unacceptable because of the possible stigmatization of the unvaccinated (for example, for people with medical withdrawals – 96.4% chose such a comment to the answer). Approximately half of the respondents (46.7 % of respondents) consider mandatory vaccination a violation of the rights and freedoms of a citizen.

Of course, the model group of respondents represents the youth population, which is generally inclined to negativism and conformism [1]. At the same time, the presence of initial biomedical knowledge in the study sample causes confusion about the spreading of "dissident vaccines" among future doctors. Of course, the influence of negative information from media is manifested, and for the youth environment, especially received from the Internet space.

At this moment, a whole campaign has been launched abroad against the introduction of the "covid-passports", which, in the understanding of ordinary people, merge with criticism of mandatory vaccination under pretence of the protection of human rights and freedom. On the one hand, the rhetoric appealing to ethical values always seems to be reasonable [2]. At the same time, the problem of discrimination, which was raised in the countries of the European Union, that have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is primarily due to access to vaccines.

Despite the fact that there is an acute shortage of vaccines, the European Commission is studying proposals for the introduction of a vaccinated passport, for the opportunity to travel within the EU. Since, in most countries of the European Union, the vaccine is not yet available for most, travel – something that was common for Europe-becomes a privilege. While waiting for the vaccine, new forms of discrimination may appear among the unvaccinated, although they didn't even have such opportunity. At the same time, statistics confirm that vulnerable groups predominate among the unvaccinated, for example, pregnant women and children, for whom the vaccine hasn't yet been approved in most countries.

The identification of priority groups for vaccination (first-line) by European countries sometimes leads to surprise. For example, in Hungary, football players enjoy priority over the population [3]. But in most countries, medical workers who are in professional contact with unvaccinated patients enjoy priority in this matter.

A shortage of vaccines creates hierarchical relationships between groups of vaccinated and non-vaccinated people (for example, in a doctor-patient relationship or an employee-client relationship) [4]. As long as pregnant women and children are not vaccinated on national level, obstacles are creating in general for the family, for example, with regard to visiting public places and traveling. By doing so, the expensive demographic policy of recent years is put at risk [5, 6]. The slow process of licensing vaccines in the European Union worsens the situation, because it's difficult to gain confidence in vaccines that haven't yet been approved (for example, Russian ones). The Council of Europe has recognized that equal access to vaccination has crucial meaning. On the ethical and legal field new concepts are emerging – "immunity-privileges" and "vaccine nationalism". Because of this, human rights defenders in Europe oppose "covid-passports" and support measures that are not so popular, but accessible to the majority (including vulnerable groups), such as using of personal protective equipment, social distancing, etc.

At the same time, in Russia, as part of negative influence of the global infodemia, effect of Internet sources on the formation of a social fashion for vaccine dissidence feels [7]. The fundamental difference is that even in the countries of Europe there is a shortage of vaccines. In particular, related to the violation of contractual obligations by the biopharmaceutical company Astra-Zeneca. The Russian Federation is increasing the pace of reproduction of national vaccines that are available to everyone and professional groups. But one campaign for vaccination, without a convincing popular scientific (accessible to the population and focused on individual groups) arguments, doesn't seem effective.

**Conclusion.** The pandemic of a new coronavirus infection hasn't only initiated an unprecedented crisis in all spheres of society around the world, but also changed the approach to evaluating scientific research and implementing their results in practice. At the beginning of the pandemic, the measures taken by States were perceived axiomatically, trust in social institutions was based on the suddenness of the situation and the lack of medical knowledge among the population. The prolonged pandemic, against the background of a shortage of state resources, naturally caused a wave of parientific information in the Internet space, broadcast by the mass media. The youth environment is particularly susceptible to such influence, communication in which has the character of information chaos.

In this regard, the demand for socio-psychological support of vocational education is increasing, where in the conditions of the educational environment, sociological monitoring and moral and psychological correction seems to be the most realistic [8]. In relation to medical education, the most optimal tool for such an impact is humanitarian education, which allows focusing on the ethical rules and moral values of the profession within the educational process [9]. Volgograd State University has established

a unit-department of the International Network of Bioethics Departments, which unites about 200 departments abroad, within the framework of which there is a constant exchange of experience in bioethical education in various forms of international collaboration (a forum of bioethics teachers, joint research, publications, competitions for students).

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