

TALLINNA TERVISHOIU KÕRGKOO



# Factors Influencing Decision Making on Childhood Vaccination Amongst Mothers of Toddlers

Maarja Sukles

Bachelor's thesis  
Institute of International Social Studies  
Tallinn University  
2014

Tallinn 2017

# Introduction

- Bachelor's thesis defended in 2014
  - Institute of International Social Studies, Tallinn University
  - Supervisor: Liis Ojamäe, PhD
- Awardee of the Tallinn University Bachelor Student Research Papers Competition, 2015, Social Sciences, 2nd place
- Awardee of the Republic of Estonia Ministry of Social Affairs Bachelor Student Research Papers Competition, 2015

# Introduction

- An on-going trend toward increasing rates of vaccine refusal has been noticed in Estonia and Europe within the last decades.
- The aim of the study is to explore the **process of decision making** on childhood vaccination and **its influencing factors** among mothers of toddlers under 2.5 years in Estonia.

2-AASTASTE LASTE IMMUNISEERITUS (%)					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Difteeria ja teetanus	94,6	94,8	94,5	94	93,7
Läkaköha	94,6	94,8	94,5	94	93,7
Poliomüeliit	94,6	94,8	94,5	94	93,7
Leetrid, mumps, punetised	93,6	93,7	93,4	93,2	93,2
B-hepatiit	94,7	94,7	94,1	93,4	92,5
Haemophilus influenzae tüüp B (Hib)	95,1	95,1	95	94,1	93,8

Allikas: Terviseamet

# Theoretical perspective

- Reflexive modernity and risk society
  - Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck
  - Domination of negative side effects, individualisation of life styles and social careers, plurality of knowledge and values, lack of general goals and aims. (Rosa et al 2013:70).
- Post-traditional society
  - Fallibility of expertise and openness to doubt, lack of trust in abstract systems. (Giddens 1994).
- Social construction of medical knowledge
  - Non-linear causality of the occurrence and reason of a health problem, impact of the social and cultural context. (Hinote and Wasserman 2013).

# Methodology

- Interviews
  - 12 semi-structured interviews:  
6 vaccinated their child according to the Estonian immunization program and 6 refused at least one vaccine
  - Time period: 19.02.2013 – 10.01.2014
  - Age: 22-42 years
  - Snowball method
- Analysis
  - Qualitative thematic analysis
  - Program: Nvivo 10

# Discussion 1

- Childhood immunisation is regarded as a choice when becoming aware of the dangers related to vaccination.
- Both vaccination and vaccine-preventable diseases are regarded as threatening aspects of a child's health.
  - Different interpretation of the concept “risk” and “threat”.
- The aspect of vaccination being a choice encourages mothers to do more research on the subject.
  - Related to responsibility and need for a conscious choice.
  - Conscious choice = feeling of autonomy and capacity to take responsibility when complications or unwished consequences occur.
  - Distrust of “abstract systems” e.g. the state.

# Discussion 2

- Need for an equal relationship with medical personnel and an open discussion of pro-s and cons of vaccination.
  - Conflict of expertise?
    - A mother is an expert of her child.
  - Medical personnel need to be able to argument over alternatives → how they orient in the information.
- Decision making process more influenced by mother's individual interpretation of vaccination, vaccine-preventable diseases and other factors.
  - Mother/parent constructs her/his own truth.
- Paradox of a democratic state and freedom of choice?

# Conclusion

- Important role on individual interpretation, not the factors themselves.
- Constant threat of current “facts” becoming invalid by new information.
- Mothers’ wish and need to create their “own truth” which is, in our current democratic world, our civilian right.
- Need to involve more mothers in the decision making about their children’s health → mother as a co-expert.



The background features a stylized, abstract design with large, overlapping shapes in light blue and yellow. A white circle is positioned at the top center, partially overlapping a blue shape. The overall composition is clean and modern.

Thank you for your attention!  
Questions?

# References

**Giddens, A.** (1994). Living in a Post-Traditional Society. In Beck, U., Giddens, A., Lash, S. *Reflexive Modernisation*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Pp 56-109.

**Hinote, B.P., Wasserman, J.A.** (2013). Reflexive Modernity and the Sociology of Health. Chpt 11. In *Medical Sociology on the Move: New Directions in Theory*. Cockerham W. C., Heidelberg, New York, London: Springer Dordrecht. Pp 215-232.

**Rosa, E., McCright, A., Renn, O.** (2013). *The Risk Society Revisited : Social Theory and Risk Governance*. Temple University Press.