

NAPCRG 52nd Annual Meeting — Abstracts of Completed Research 2024.

Submission Id: 5956

Title

Overcoming COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Rural Northern New England for Adults

Priority 1 (Research Category)

COVID-19

Presenters

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Abstract

Background: Vaccinating a significant portion of the American population with one of the COVID-19 vaccines is critical in reaching herd immunity to end the current pandemic. Vaccine hesitancy remains a major hurdle in ending this pandemic. A poll from March of 2021 by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that vaccine hesitancy was highest in rural communities, with 21% of rural residents stating they would "definitely not" get a vaccine compared with 10% of urban residents. Vaccine hesitancy is higher among rural Americans for many reasons including perceptions of risk of COVID-19, personal and/or religious reservations about the vaccines, distrust of the government and misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccinations. Settings & Participants: In an effort to increase understanding and knowledge of attitudes and perceptions of the rural population towards the COVID-19 vaccines to develop effective interventions to reduce vaccine hesitancy and increase vaccination rates in rural areas. To this end we have collaborated with three rural Federally Qualified Health Centers in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont and surveyed their patient populations ages 25 to 65 to understand their knowledge of and perception of the COVID-19 vaccinations. We will also assess patient reactions and perceptions to messaging developed by the NNE-CTR pilot grant "Development of Messaging to Encourage COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake among Rural Americans" featuring testimonials by health center clinicians and staff members about their reasons for choosing to be vaccinated. A 2021 survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation Vaccine Monitor revealed that 77-84% of patients surveyed would consult a health care provider when deciding whether to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. We at the same time surveyed Primary Care Clinicians in rural Northern New England associated with the Dartmouth Primary Care Research Network and community partner practices of the Northern New England Clinical and Translational Research Network regarding their perceptions of patients' knowledge and attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccinations and how they as clinicians address patient vaccine hesitancy.

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