

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

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Title

Utilizing Community Outreach Workers to address COVID-19 Misinformation

Priority 1 (Research Category)

COVID-19

Presenters

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Abstract

Background: The University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM) combats COVID-19 misinformation in youth to reduce vaccine hesitancy through targeted outreach and education. The University provided guidance on how to recruit youth ambassadors, train community members and staff to accomplish the goals of the project, to decrease the vaccine hesitancy rate and increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among youth through education/outreach from respected individuals and organizations from local communities.

Settings & Participants: The UMSOM partnered with 8 community-based organizations that represent vulnerable communities in MD, DE, VA, and WV.

Methods: UMSOM connected with organizations that have roots in local communities in areas with high vaccine hesitancy rates. Community members were hired as outreach workers (COW) from these communities to provide outreach, education, and connections to vaccination resources. COWs were trained in motivational interviewing and educated about common misconceptions about the COVID-19 vaccine in their own communities.

Results: There were a total of 4,579 outreach events held of which 9.98% of the events targeted youth under 18 years old. Another 5.79% targeted young adults ages 19-29. The racial breakdown of those reached are: 39.01% Black/African American, 34.37% White, 7.43% Asian, 11.76% two or more races, 0.62% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 6.19% other. Of the educational events that targeted youth, some vulnerable populations included children, pregnant teens, children with special needs (neurodevelopmental/mental health needs), impoverished individuals, recent juvenile justice wards of the state, and LGBTQ+ identifying individuals. Among COWs, 48.47% lived in the communities that they performed outreach in (18.7% preferred not to answer). The racial breakdown of the COWs were: 50.19% Black/African American, 28.84% White, 2.25% Asian, 0.75% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.75% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 17.23% preferred not to answer. There were 32

COWs that were under 30 years old. In total, 35 vaccinations were administered to the 0-4y age group, 1,677 to the 5-11y age group, 775 to the 12-15y age group, 674 to the 16-20y age group, 5,696 to the 21-64y age group, and 3,577 to the 65+y age group.

Conclusions: Hiring diverse COW's and youth ambassadors from the same communities in which they live allows for unequivocal success for outreach, education, and vaccination.

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