

# An Interdisciplinary Approach to Addressing COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake Hesitancy Among Community Health Fair Participants in Gwinnett County, GA

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## Background

Vaccine uptake hesitancy is a key factor affecting public health, notably during this current COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing this is of utmost importance and poses a great challenge requiring effective communication and education. Presently, concerns raised by the public regarding hesitancy include uncertainty about vaccine safety, vaccines being produced too quickly, personal fears and beliefs, conspiracy theories, myths, misinformation, and religious leaders' misinformation to their congregations.

## Objectives

Identify barriers for COVID-19 vaccine uptake hesitancy among non-vaccinated individuals attending community health fairs and possibly address their concerns through education and proper communication.

## Methods

This service project was conducted over two consecutive health fairs in Gwinnett County, GA held in July and September 2021, respectively, each for 3 hours. The program was governed by an interdisciplinary team of eight students and two faculty advisors from the PCOM Georgia school of pharmacy, doctor of osteopathic medicine and masters of biomedical sciences programs and was carried out as a booth-led discussion with health fair attendees.

- Common COVID-19 vaccine myths were researched and pamphlets debunking them were created prior to the health fairs.
- Pamphlets were distributed to participants to facilitate communication and provide vaccine education.
- Interactive sessions with both vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals were held to ascertain reasons behind non-vaccinated individuals' hesitancy.
- All participants were educated about the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccines in contrast to the risks of acquiring COVID-19 without prior immunity.
- Individual concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines were addressed as appropriate.



## Pamphlets debunking COVID-19 Vaccine Myths



## Results

As expected, non-vaccinated individuals expressed:

- general uncertainty about the COVID-19 vaccines relating to safety
- various fears and faith-based hesitations
- beliefs stemming from myths surrounding the COVID-19 vaccines prevalent on social media

Specific reasons behind hesitancy in Gwinnett County residents were:

- a faith-based rationale
- uncertainty of which vaccine was appropriate to receive
- concern about side effects and perceived risk of down-time

Overall observations were that most non-vaccinated individuals expressed concerns governed by fears and uncertainty of the vaccines themselves rather than of the COVID-19 virus-induced disease itself.

## Conclusion

In Gwinnett County, GA, as in much of the country, vaccine hesitancy is a great challenge posing a threat for adequate vaccine uptake. Individual beliefs and uncertainty can be curtailed through proper communication and education. The myths and conspiracies surrounding the COVID-19 vaccines can be addressed in a grassroots manner with interdisciplinary health professional students under faculty guidance. Increasing public awareness of these concerns through proper education, communication and helping to debunk some of these myths surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine can help alleviate these fears and possibly increase vaccination rates which will consequently bring us closer to herd immunity.

## References

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## Disclosure/Contact

All authors have nothing to disclose. Presenting author: [ga255035@pcom.edu](mailto:ga255035@pcom.edu)