

VACCINATION FOR ADULTS



STRATEGY INTRO: Increase demand for, and access to flu, COVID-19, and other adult vaccinations via 40 pop-up community clinics at the places that cultural groups feel comfortable and connected, and increase regularity of vaccine promotion in priority communities; and increase the percentage of pan-Asian and pan-African seniors who are up-to-date with recommended adult vaccinations.

BLOG DISCUSSION #7

FROM 'CHINA VIRUS' STIGMA TO VACCINE DOUBTS: THE DUAL CHALLENGES FACING ASIAN AMERICANS DURING COVID-19

PREFACE: Since late last year, Asian Media Access has been actively interviewed BIPOC members for issues related to vaccination hesitancy, in order to better design our vaccination mobilization effort. Please follow up us, with a new story every month. And this time the Vaccine Hesitancy story is from Asian American communities.

Asian Americans have been impacted greatly by the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether it be blame, discrimination, or even violence, many have faced severe repercussions from the pandemic. These negative impacts of the virus have a direct correlation with Asian American vaccine hesitancy. Although there are various other factors that affect vaccine hesitancy, the main reason is because of fear. In order to increase vaccination rates among Asian Americans, we must examine the impact of the virus on peoples' lives first.

It can be inferred that Asian Americans are less likely to receive COVID vaccinations because of fear of hate and racism. Because of the origins of the virus, the negative rhetoric from politicians and media, and the prominence of racism even before the virus, Asian Americans have suffered from vast amounts of violence and hate. Whether it be physical or verbal abuse, the hate that these communities have received has led to fear of even going out in public. Of course, this also depends on the environment (city, suburban, rural), but the fact of the matter is that many Asian American communities fear the violence that has become increasingly prominent since the beginnings of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Many vaccination sites are run by organizations or volunteers, but all of these sites are in some way related to the government. Backing from the government gives these sites credibility, as the government was pushing for most of the population to get vaccinated against COVID. However, government rhetoric towards Asian Americans during the pandemic was generally negative. There wasn't as much focus on pushing Asian Americans to get vaccinated as blaming them for the origins of the virus. As a result, Asian Americans did not feel compelled to receive a vaccine that the government was pushing for. Even though many Asian Americans want to get vaccinated to protect themselves and their families, they do not feel safe going to vaccination sites due to fear of harassment. Scheduling issues also exist, because many clinics ask participants to register for specific times. Life happens and sometimes not everyone is able to make it, resulting in some being turned away from a possible life-saving vaccine.

Additionally, cultural reasons serve as a deterrent for vaccination. Many Asian American cultures value the elderly and children as the most vulnerable to harm. The elderly are often affected extremely severely by COVID, and children are usually more susceptible to disease. Unknown origins of the vaccine may serve as an obstacle to vaccination. The effects of the vaccine vary for each person and can have potentially damaging consequences on those who are more vulnerable. Some Asian families also worry that some kids may be too young to receive the vaccine, especially since vaccine doses consider age instead of weight. Since children's weight may vary depending on multiple factors, weight is arguably more important than age when considering medicine. There is also very little knowledge on how the vaccine will affect young kids or even adults in the future, and because of that uncertainty, some

families were reluctant to have kids receive the vaccination. Customs and beliefs in Asian American communities rely more on whole-body wellness and natural treatment. Instead of relying on vaccines, some families prefer to naturally build immunity because these treatments help long-term health. Ultimately, fear and cultural teachings have a profound effect on vaccination hesitancy.

Increasing vaccination rates for Asian Americans starts with reducing the hate and stigma. Instead of blaming Asian Americans for the impacts of COVID, making them feel comfortable in different environments can prompt them to get vaccinated and protect their communities. Getting rid of the fear of violence and discrimination will lead to overall safer and healthier communities. Addressing scheduling incompatibilities can lead to improvements in the system. Compared to strict scheduling times, allowing walk-ins and opening up a general schedule where anyone can receive a vaccine can result in a larger number of people willing to go to clinics. Also, furthering education on how vaccinations can improve confidence on their safety.



As mentioned before, Asian American families may worry how vaccines affect children because of distribution based on age instead of weight. However, medicines and vaccines work differently; vaccines don't contain drugs and are based on development depending on age. The COVID vaccine has been proven safe for children multiple times, so making information such as this more available can help reduce hesitancy. As for cultural customs such as natural remedies, COVID is an immediate problem. Natural immunity takes a long while to build up, time which cannot be wasted during a pressing disease like COVID-19. Vaccines are ultimately the safest way to protect against the disease. Many studies have revealed the positive effects and safety of the vaccine, and as more research unfolds in the future, the vaccine will continue to be improved upon.

As America transitions and moves on from the pandemic, it is important to keep in mind that safe and healthy communities start with the actions of individuals. Decreasing vaccine hesitancy is only one possible positive of respecting and caring for everyone in the community, including Asian Americans.