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UTILIZING COMMUNITY NETWORKS IN BARBERSHOPS AND SALONS TO ADDRESS COVID-19 VACCINE HESITANCY IN BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Background:

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected communities of color with Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans four times more likely to be hospitalized and three times more likely to die from COVID-19 (1). Nevertheless, vaccination rates are still three times higher in white people compared to Black Americans (2). In Maryland, Black Americans make up 15.5% of currently vaccinated individuals (3) despite making up 31.1% of Maryland's population (4). Further, according to a Kaiser Family poll, 35% of Black Americans say they do not plan on getting the vaccine citing mistrust in the safety of the vaccine development process (5).

Methods/Approach:

We reached out to an existing community network of barbershops and salons. After receiving input from employees and customers, we mutually developed a COVID-19 vaccine education plan. In this plan, QR codes are to be distributed to barbershops and salons in Baltimore, directing community members to COVID-19 vaccine outreach material from social media platforms, expert panels and written information on websites. The plan additionally provides community members an opportunity for continued engagement in COVID-19 vaccine education via email.

Lessons Learned:

Leveraging previously existing community health networks can be critical in addressing vaccine hesitancy that is rooted in decades of medical distrust. Community-based participatory research provides a framework for sustainably engaging in this work and measuring the impact.

Implications:

To reach vulnerable populations and promote the spread of accurate information, clinicians and public health professionals must engage their local communities via culturally sensitive approaches.

References:

- 1) Risk for COVID-19 Infection, Hospitalization, and Death By Race/Ethnicity. (2021, February 18). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>
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- 3) Maryland Department of Health. Retrieved from <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/#Vaccine>
- 4) U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Maryland. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>
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COMMUNITY PARTNER

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