

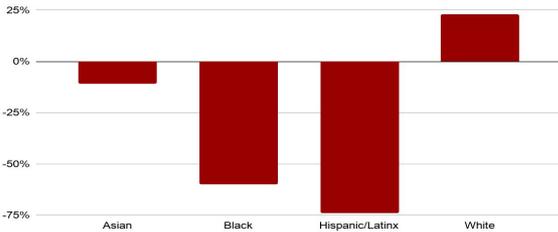
Community Partnerships to Address Barriers to Covid-19 Vaccine Access Among Vulnerable Adults

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Background

While disparities have always been present in our healthcare system, the COVID-19 pandemic has shed a bright light on the health inequities in our country. This is particularly true for the diverse community of New Brunswick, NJ., especially for underserved populations who have the poorest outcomes from COVID-19 infection. Vaccination has both an individual benefit by providing protection from infectious disease, and a social benefit by reducing the transmission rates in populations through herd immunity. This initiative emphasizes the promotion of primary prevention in an urban area by collaborating with community partners to facilitate registration for the COVID-19 vaccine through the NJ Vaccine Scheduling System (NJVSS); coordinate vaccine appointments through the Student-Run Vaccine Clinic (SVC) at our local FQHC, Eric B Chandler Health Center (EBCHC); and provide interpreter services. We aim to lower barriers to vaccination and improve long term health outcomes in New Brunswick populations in context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Percent Difference Between Racial Demographic Proportion and Percent of Vaccines Administered in Middlesex County, NJ (March 2021)

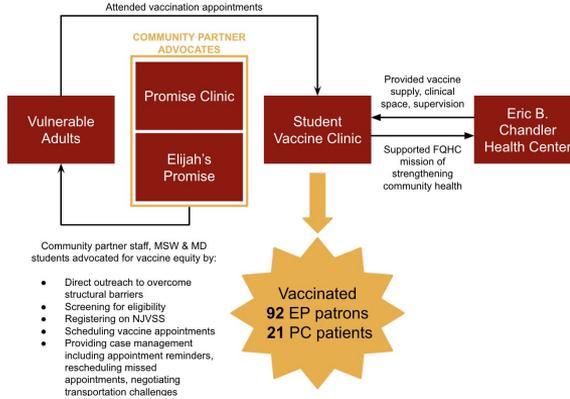


Methods

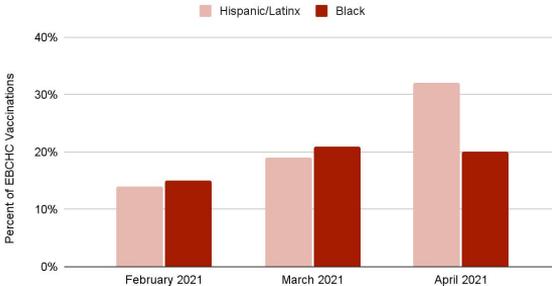
Students set-up a weekly registration table to register eligible patrons of EP for vaccinations when the patrons came to pick up meals. In addition, students with established relationships with vulnerable adults through PC reached out to register their patients. Once registered, vaccine appointments were made possible via protected times set aside for these organizations by the SVC at EBCHC.



Left: Dr. Karen Lin & EP Staff Member, Milton Rivera, organizing mask distribution to EP clients in March 2020. Right: SVC pre-clinic brief preparing for vaccine administration in March 2021.



Community Partnerships Associated with Increased Vaccination Rates among Black & Hispanic Adults



Results

From March to May 2021, the SVC provided a total of 141 vaccines to EP patrons (82 of moderna #1, 49 of moderna #2, 10 of Janssen); a total of 41 to PC patients (31 moderna #1, 10 moderna #2). From February through April, the demographic of our population receiving vaccines increased from 14% and 15% Hispanic/Latinx and Black, respectively, to 19% Hispanic/Latinx and 21% Black in March and 32% Hispanic/Latinx and 20% Black in April.



Left: SVC Student Director, Cameron Schmidt, vaccinating community leader and EP Staff Member, Chef Curtis. Right: Testimonial on increased vaccine access from EP client.

COVID-19 Vaccination Stories



Thanks to Elijah's Promise and the RWJMS students working with Eric B. Chandler Health Center, me and my caregiver were vaccinated in record time without traveling a long distance. Thank you!

-Michael Falco, US Army Vietnam Vet



Discussion & Conclusions

Primary prevention in regard to COVID vaccination allows for individual and population benefits in the context of immediate and long-term health maintenance and reducing health disparities. In order to reduce health disparities and barriers to vaccination in underserved populations of New Brunswick, this initiative utilized the strength and flexibility of existing trusting relationships between community partners and individual vulnerable adults. As family medicine providers, we understand the value of building trusting relationships and the impact of involvement with our communities. Although limited by a small sample population, the success of this work demonstrates the profound effect these relationships can have in improving community and individual health in times of crisis and highlights the importance of investing in our communities as a routine part of our work.

Future Directions

Our team plans to continue this initiative to promote community vaccination and lower existing healthcare barriers for inhabitants of New Brunswick. As more data is collected on the demographics and percentages of people obtaining their vaccinations, we hope to understand any shortcomings our initiative has. As of now, populations identifying as Hispanic/Latinx have the lowest vaccination rates in New Brunswick. One member of our team has been organizing lectures about COVID-19 and vaccination in order to open up discussion within the Hispanic populations about vaccine hesitancy in order to better understand and bridge this gap.

References

1. Devlin, Nick. How the Racial Disparities in COVID-19 Distribution are Affecting NJ. *NJ.com*. March 13, 2021. Accessed May 21, 2021.