

Pandemic offers unique opportunity to corral global vaccine denialism movement

Bringing increased attention to vaccination now is especially important as the world continues to combat COVID-19, a novel infectious disease that is easily transmissible and has an uncertain disease course, disproportionately affects elderly and ethnic/racial minority populations, provides fertile ground for misinformation, and has become politicized. As an uncertain population anticipates the development of a COVID-19 vaccine to help return society to some semblance of normalcy, priming the public for vaccine acceptance is an urgent public health priority.

With daily lives interrupted and vaccine discussions dominating news headlines, government hearings, and social media discourse, this urgency should be used as a teachable moment to promote vaccine literacy, address hesitancy, and build resilience to misinformation specific to a COVID-19 vaccine and about vaccination more generally. These efforts require us to reengage the public, community leaders, health care providers, public health practitioners, policymakers, and health agencies in addressing the challenges associated with bolstering vaccine-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

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As we collectively face the public health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to proactively and thoughtfully develop, test, and implement timely communication interventions to increase vaccine confidence. It is challenging enough to promote uptake of vaccination under normal circumstances, but it is particularly vital in anticipation of a future COVID-19 vaccine and the contentious discourse and pervasive misinformation that currently surrounds this topic.

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