COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy and Severe Mental Illness

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**Background**

- There have been 14.2 million people who have had a severe mental illness in the past year.¹
- According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), near 1 in 25 adults in America live with a serious mental illness.²
- In 2019, the WHO listed vaccine hesitancy among the top 10 threats to global health because it “threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases.”³

**Objectives**

To highlight the motivations when acquiring the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as continuing motivation for further vaccinations.

**Methods**

**Study Design:**
- Interviewer-administered 21-item survey

**Study Dissemination:**
- Delivered verbally in-person
- Responses collected on the Qualtrics survey platform
- PHI collected on paper separately

**Study Population:**
- Patients (18+) actively engaged in treatment for a severe mental illness at a community mental health center in St. Louis, Missouri during the time of data collection.

**Study Measures:**
- Responses to questions about COVID-19 vaccines, primary sources of information, internal and external motivations on receiving the vaccine initially, as well as motivations to continue to receive booster doses.

**Results**

**Graph 1: External Motivations of Fully Vaccinated (select all that apply)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Motivations</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work/School Required it</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid of infection/death</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More comfortable due to several receiving</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt pressure from Government/public health Authority</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt pressure from Healthcare provider</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt pressure from friends/family</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoke to case worker/therapist</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoke to Healthcare professionals</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 2: Increase willingness to receive more of COVID-19 series (select all that apply)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Motivations</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More info on approval process of vaccine</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less injection burden</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Healthcare professionals voicing their opinion</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More info on statistics of disease</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More info on side effects</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

- Forty-six percent of respondents stated they received most of their information regarding COVID-19 by private/personal medical sources; which was the most accessible resource for this patient population. While none received information from social media.
- The top four reasons for declining vaccination included: not thinking it was needed, didn’t think it was safe, having a previous bad vaccination experience in the past, and adverse side effects.
- Out of all the participants, majority (57%) consulted with medical professionals about getting vaccinated with COVID-19 while 15% of those stated they would like more healthcare professionals to voice their opinions.

- There seems to be a potential link between the unvaccinated responses and lower mental health, but additional data is needed to be conclusive.
- There are so many vaccine infographics and campaigns on social media, but it seems we’re missing a large population.
- Understanding COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and motivation within this population is important to promote vaccine acceptance while developing strategies tailoring to the specific needs of the patient.

**Notes**

2. Medical Chart Data from “Adequate National Alliance on Mental Illness.” [https://www.nami.org/Media/Infographics/1].

**Figure 1: Overall Mental Health During the Pandemic**

- 33% Better than before
- 19% Same as before
- 48% Worse than before

**Figure 2: Current Mental Health**

- 56% Good or Better
- 44% Less than Good

**References**