

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION: COMMUNITY ENGAGED APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING PARENT HEALTH DECISION MAKING EXTENSION INTERNSHIP EL PASO COUNTY

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ADDRESSING MISINFORMATION IN COLORADO

The response to COVID-19 vaccine calls for a community-integrated approach that is necessary to surmount pandemic misinformation. This study stems from key themes which emerged from interviewing community leaders from diverse sectors around CO. The results revealed COVID vaccine perceptions and communication have impacted routine vaccinations which calls for further investigation.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

This is part of an interdisciplinary project across the Departments of Journalism and Media Communication and Microbiology, Immunology, and Pathology. This internship had two main goals;

The first goal was to identify community members who make health decisions for their children and discuss their health decision making

Second was to provide community engaged education to El Paso County members on viruses and strategies to identifying and addressing misinformation

IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL GOALS

I chose to apply to this internship because the goals of the project aligns with my academic goals. I am currently a doctoral candidate in the department of Journalism and Media Communication who recently accepted an assistant professor position at University of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, Canada.

I plan to conduct community-engaged research specifically among indigenous communities. This internship presents an opportunity to learn about community engaged science communication research.

COMMUNITY ENGAGED OUTREACH

The goal of this study was to understand how parents and community members make decisions around vaccinations, and how communications on diverse platforms, including interpersonal and mediated sources impact their decisions.

I worked with mentors to develop research questions, structure interview questions, and document participants' experiences. I interviewed nine 4-H parents who make health decisions for their children/wards at the El Paso County fair.

I also provided community-engaged education on viruses, herd immunity, and strategies to correctly fact check information. I shared credible resources of science communication like CSU's One-Health Institute and SPUR campus.

Figure 1: Health Communication Outreach at El Paso County Fair



LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout the internship I learned;

- Sensitivity in communicating controversial health topics.
- Ethical approaches to documenting community members' perspectives of health topics.

RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS

Sources of Information

- **Interpersonal sources:** Doctors, Pastors, Friends & Family
- **Online Sources** e.g., Google, Patriot websites, Social media groups

Risk/Benefits of Routine Vaccination

- Protection from diseases
- Concerns about vaccination cocktails
- Autism Perceptions

Concerns about COVID Vaccine

- Concerns about vaccine efficacy and severe reactions/side effects
- Insufficient longitudinal study
- Distrust of politicians

Benefits of COVID Vaccines

- Essential workers are protected
- Helped folks return to pre-COVID activities
- Safety and protection

"Why this vaccine? Because I feel like there's so many vaccines that are more valuable to my children. But then it makes me question, was it all for money? Was it all for power? I don't know. And I don't know these answers and I don't know if we ever truly will, but it does make me hesitant to give my children new vaccines that are coming out that are like, "Oh, we need to do this one now. We need to do that one." If I don't know about it and it hasn't been tested and I don't see the actual data from years of use, it makes it difficult for me to trust" – Mother of 4 children, ages 11, 10, 7 & 2

FUTURE TRAJECTORY

The plan is to use the materials from this study to inform curriculum development at CSU. We will develop case studies with Immunize Colorado which tracks vaccine decision making across the state.

This course-based project will rely on academic-community framework and the interview data from El Paso County provides audience background and depth to inform the case study development.