



Unmasking the COVID-19 vaccination myths: intervention through collaboration

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Dear Editor,

In a recent special article published in this journal, the authors presented the different myths surrounding the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines in Africa that impact their acceptance. The two common myths that respondents agreed with were that “since vaccines for COVID-19 have been developed, we can make vaccines for the common cold, human immunodeficiency viruses, and other diseases” and that “researchers rushed the development of the COVID-19 vaccines; therefore, it is not very effective, safe and cannot be trusted [1].” With the sample myths, I have come to realize how valid is this claim which also increases the issue of vaccine hesitancy in the Philippines. Therefore, this correspondence aims to determine some popular myths in the Philippines which hinder a full vaccine rollout and then explore concrete ways on how the government can strategically combat such hindrances for a successful vaccination campaign.

In a study that examined vaccination narratives and challenges as experienced and observed by Filipinos during the early vaccination period, some of the most common myths concerning the vaccine are identified [2]: first, the life span of those who are vaccinated is shortened and they only have 2 to 3 years to live; second, vaccines are viewed as unnecessary and insufficient to prevent disease; third, the young ones do not need the vaccines but only those at high risk especially the elderly and persons with comorbidities. More myths have also circulated on social media that caused fear such as the vaccine can give you COVID-19 since it contains the virus; those who got infected and recovered from the COVID-19 do not need the jab anymore; the vaccine can cause infertility among women, and persons with an allergy should not get the vaccine [3].

There are various ways proposed by researchers to battle these myths and achieve a higher vaccination rate. One of which is utilizing the online platform since it is considered the most relevant approach during the pandemic where restrictions and lockdowns in many areas are implemented. Equipping the official websites of the government’s health department with factual information regarding the disease and vaccine efficacy is a must. Every country should strategically enrich its website with updated sections and easy-to-understand infographics. This is fortunately done in the country but not consistently actualized. There are still many areas, especially in far-flung provinces, where accessibility is a problem which means that there is a slow to an unavailable internet connection. Some entries on the website are also not regularly updated. Through a well-planned collaboration between the private and government sectors,



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the creation of a well-designed digital vaccination campaign can get the job done. Concerning this, a massive information campaign through various social media platforms needs to be prioritized given the fact that Filipinos are one of the top-most users [4]. Shared stories and testimonies of the locals' successful vaccination experience posted on different social media pages can encourage others to get vaccinated. Lastly, with the government's support and funding, doctors and other healthcare workers must do a house-to-house vaccination campaign and service, especially for those vulnerable and older citizens in distant places.

There is still a lot of work to be done since the pandemic is not yet over. The situation in the different parts of the world varies and while vaccines may be very effective at reducing the number of people getting infected, they cannot guarantee 100% protection, especially the fact that the virus can mutate for new variants. Ending vaccination myths may also take some time but at least can be lessened significantly if there is enough effort and collaboration from everyone.

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