

Creating Community Forums to Streamline Public Health Information about the Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccines Case Study

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Introduction

Community Health and Empowerment through Education and Research (CHEER) organized a COVID-19 Community Conversation Series with local health professionals to discuss child wellness, but most importantly, provide accurate health information and address questions, concerns, and learn the perspectives from community members in Long Branch regarding the approval of COVID-19 vaccines for 5 to 11-year-olds. Through this forum, families of the community would have the opportunity to discuss with the health professionals what they know about the pediatric COVID-19 vaccines but as well, curb misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccines.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines infodemic as “too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak. It causes confusion and risk-taking behaviors that can harm health. It also leads to mistrust in health authorities and undermines the public health response” (WHO, n.d.). The infodemic has been a “hidden” epidemic during the COVID-19 pandemic with widespread misinformation being shared through various digital technologies and platforms such as social media (Banerjee & Meena, 2021). In a recent report, The Kaiser Family Foundation found that “78% of adults saying they have heard at least one of eight different false statements about COVID-19 and that they believe it to be true or are unsure if it is true or false” (Hamel et al., 2021).

To address misinformation in a localized, community-based effort and utilize a community asset-based approach, CHEER partnered up with a local pediatrician, local family physician, county health official, and community health workers/advocates to have this community dialogue at a nearby community farmers market, Crossroads Farmers Market. Crossroads Farmers Market has been featured in the news media for innovation in being one of the first farmers markets to accept food supplemental programs and for being a go-to location for community organizations to mobilize promotoras de salud to close the Latino vaccination gap.

Initiative Overview

CHEER hosted two community conversations. The first community conversation series took place on November 3, 2021, the day after the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) approved the pediatric COVID-19 vaccines for 5 to 11-year-old children. The second event took place the following week, November 10, 2021. Prior to the event taking place, we marketed the event on social media, local community listservs, sent text messages to surrounding zip codes and posted the flyers at local businesses such as grocery stores, laundromats, and hair salons.

During the event, community health workers conducted outreach to notify community members at the farmers market about the recent approval of the pediatric vaccines and if they would like to speak with local health professionals regarding its approval. Each family member spoke with a public health professional on a variety of topics from common questions such as: How many doses will the vaccine be? What are the common side effects? Is it the same vaccine for adults? To asking about the accessibility of pediatric vaccines in the community. The community health worker would partner up with one of the medical providers to share both health information and promote their own personal experiences. After each dialogue, community health workers would assess the community members' comfort of vaccinating their child or themselves, as well as their experience at the event.

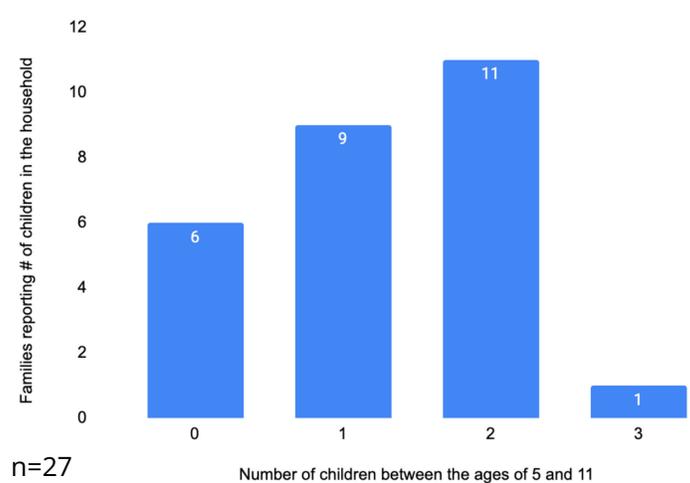
This event was not meant to replace any participants' medical relationship they may have with their current provider. It was meant to create awareness and accessibility to health information about the pediatric COVID-19 vaccines. The public health professionals encouraged participants to follow up with their provider. If the participants did not have a provider, a community health worker was on staff to help them find health insurance (if eligible), or make an appointment at a local community clinic. Incentives, such as health kits, were also provided to community members who completed the survey. One community member also won a raffle prize for completing the survey.



Reported outcomes of the community conversation series

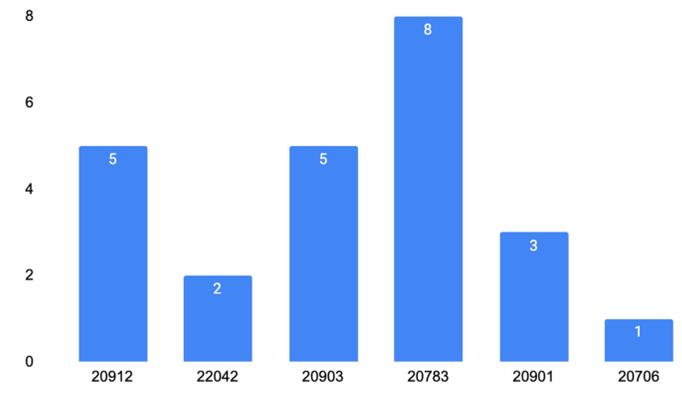
A total number of 27 (n=27) community members were reached at the event and all participants completed the survey. While all participants completed the survey, there were some questions that were skipped by the participants.

How many children between the ages of 5 and 11 live at home?



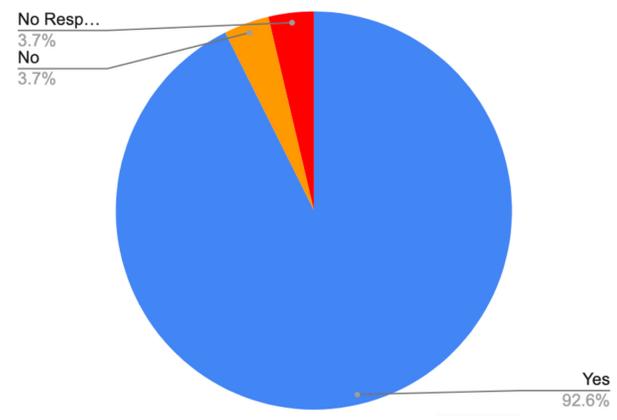
- n=27
- 6 families reported that there were no children between the ages of 5 to 11 living in the household.
 - 9 families reported that 1 child between the ages of 5 to 11 live in the household.
 - 11 families reported that 2 children between the ages of 5 to 11 live in the household.
 - 1 family reported that 3 children between the ages 5 to 11 live in the household.

Zipcodes Impacted



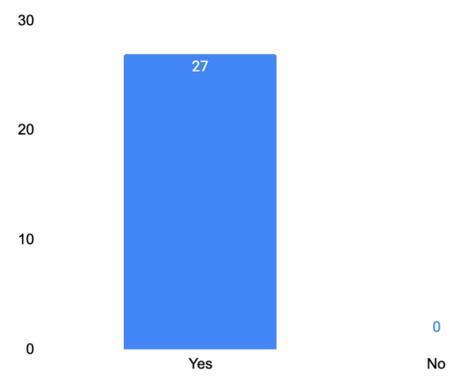
- n=24
- Community members that participated in the event were mostly from surrounding zip codes in the community (Montgomery County and Prince George's County, Maryland)
 - However, 2 community members were from Fairfax County, Virginia

Did the presenters address questions you had about the COVID-19 vaccine for children?



- n=26
- 92.6% (25) of the participants reported that the presenters addressed the questions they had about the COVID-19 vaccine for children.
 - 3.7% (1) of the participants reported that the presenters did not address the questions they had about the COVID-19 vaccine for children.
 - 3.7% (1) of the participants did not respond to this question.

After today's presentation, do you feel comfortable vaccinating your 5 to 11-year-old child with the COVID-19 vaccine?



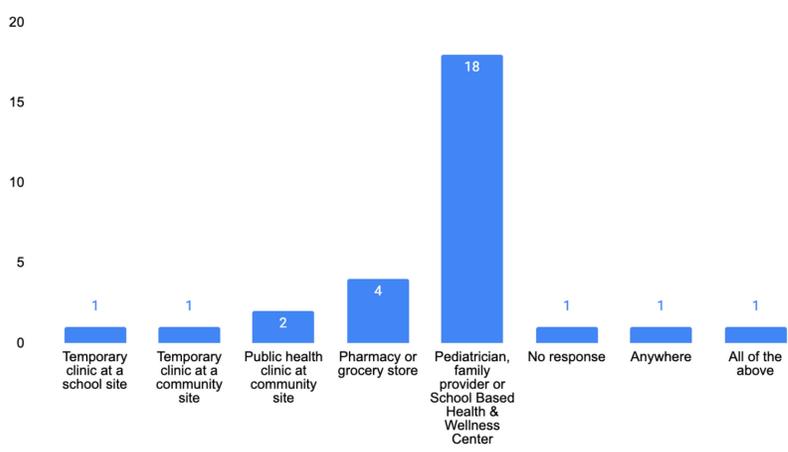
- n=27
- 100% (27) of the participants responded that after the presentation they felt more comfortable vaccinating their 5 to 11-year-old child with the COVID-19 vaccine. *This data may be skewed as 6 families reported that they did not have 5 to 11 year old children in their households.*



Pictured (left to right): Azeb Kidane CHW, Karla Castro CHW, Anthea Levy CHW, Emily Luyo CHA, Mariana Serrani CSM, Kelly Umaña MPH CCHW, Dr. Joey Nichols, Dr. Peggy Lee



Where would you prefer your child receive their COVID-19 vaccine?

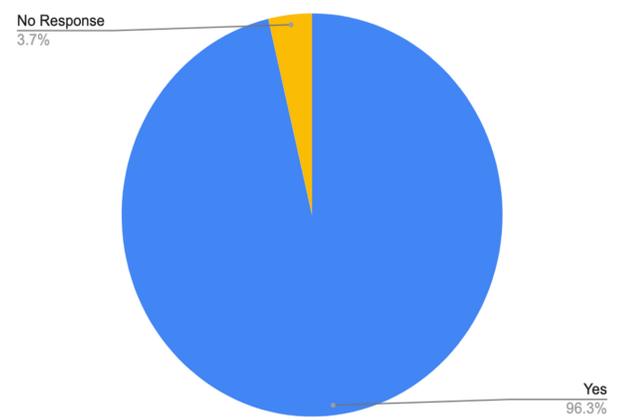


n=27

- Over 60% (18) of community members prefer to take their child to their pediatrician, family provider, or school-based health center.
- 14.8% (4) prefer to take their child to a pharmacy or grocery store.
- 7.4% (2) prefer to take them to a county/public health clinic.
- 3.7% (1) would prefer to take them anywhere, at a temporary clinic at a school site or community site, or all of the above.

This question was multiple choice, 2 participants selected more than one option.

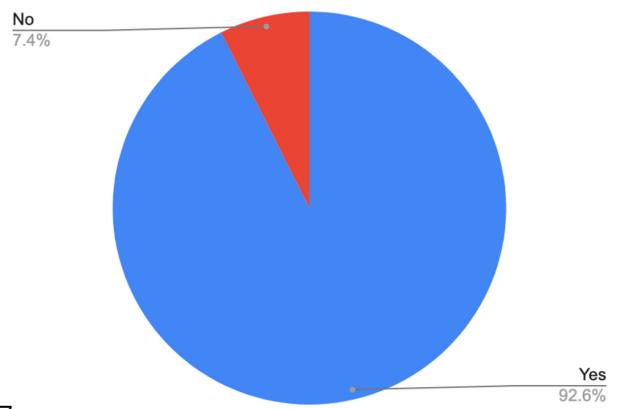
Would you recommend this event to your friends and/or family?



n=27

- 96.3% (26) reported that they would recommend this event to a friend.
- 3.7% (1) did not respond to this question.

Does your child have a primary care provider or pediatrician?



n=27

- 92.6% (25) reported that their child has a pediatrician or primary care provider.
- 7.4% (2) reported that their child does not have a pediatrician or a primary care provider.

I had a conversation with a young mother with 2 children in the 5-11 age group. She asked about side effects etc for the kids but during the course of the conversation, she revealed that she herself was not vaccinated because she was afraid of the side effects. I was able to talk her through the risks/benefits of vaccination side effects and disease with complications - I also pointed out that if she became ill with the disease, she may not be able to care for her kids. At that point, she seemed to show a complete change of mind and told me she was going to get herself vaccinated that day! My perspective on this community based forum is that it allows health information to permeate into people's otherwise busy lives without confrontation. She was just shopping at Crossroads and probably was not thinking about COVID that day. And yet, if she indeed follows through with what she promised me, and then goes further by vaccinating her children and other members of the household, the community forum hosted by CHEER has succeeded in saving a few lives!



**Dr. Peggy Lee,
Pediatrician**



Conclusion

Based on the outcomes of the survey, the community forum approach was a positive experience among community members to streamline public health information about the pediatric COVID-19 vaccines. Some community members anecdotally noted that they hadn't known that the pediatric vaccines were approved and available in the community. This forum approach was one way to ensure community members also had accessible health information at a site where they are already visiting. In addition, this empowered community members to share this information to others who they may interact with. As noted in the outcomes above, all community members reported that they would recommend this event to their friends and family. More events such as these community forums are important to rapidly provide accessible health information to community members in a manner that is culturally

Being part of the COVID-19 forum with CHEER was one of the best experiences I have ever faced so far in my life. I have the opportunity to help my community by encouraging them to take the covid-19 vaccine for the safety of their family members and the people surrounding them. As a team member of CHEER I felt somehow the responsibility to always be there for my community; as one knows everyone was scared of taking the vaccine because of the lack of information they had. So, for me it was a pleasure to provide them all the information that I learned while working at CHEER so that the people can also educate themselves and not be afraid of taking the vaccine. It was a little challenging but my team and I accomplished the goal we were seeking during these clinics and forums, and much more to go.



**Jenifer Alvarez,
Community Health Worker**

responsive and meets them where they are. CHEER has continued this community forum at local elementary schools leveraging already scheduled events such as "Cafecito con el Director" at New Hampshire Estates Elementary School organized by their Linkages to Learning, YMCA program, and at JoAnn Leleck Elementary School during their monthly principal meeting.

We hope that with this case study, other community-based organizations are inspired to test this methodology in providing accessible health information about the COVID-19 vaccines in their communities.

We would like to thank our partners and local community physicians for their collaborative support in this initiative:

- Mariana Serrani, *Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar* contributed as a reviewer and editor for this case study
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- Dr. Joey Nichols, Family Medicine Physician
- Emily Luyo, Community Health Advocate, Priority Partners

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