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BRIEF19

A daily review of covid-19 research and policy

RESEARCH BRIEFING

The fight against vaccine hesitancy crosses gender lines.

As the coronavirus vaccine rollout continues and the supply of available doses increases, the focus has now shifted to ensuring that all Americans understand the safety and benefits of immunization. Vaccine hesitancy, or vaccine deliberation as some people prefer to say, has become an important topic. Researchers at Macalester College in Minnesota published a [preprint](#) on *medRxiv* that attempted to determine best practices for increasing trust among the public for the currently available vaccines. (Of note, this study was conducted before the news about rare blood clots occurring in association with the AstraZeneca/Oxford and Johnson & Johnson vaccines became public).

In pre-covid-19 era, much of the research into vaccine hesitancy focused on parental attitudes towards childhood vaccinations. This study, however, asked adult participants watch a YouTube video entitled, “COVID mRNA vaccines explained.” The video highlighted the high efficacy of the vaccines, the rarity of side effects, and emphasized altruism in vaccination. The hope is that videos like the ones used in the study could be easily disseminated across social media in order to help inform and change opinions. In order to assess the efficacy of various strategies, the 1,600 participants were split into one of four groups. Two groups watched the video, but one with a male narrator and the other with a female narrator. Another group read a transcript of the video, while the control group received no information at all. Along with standard demographic information, political views were also obtained (i.e. conservative/Republican versus liberal/Democrat).

The male-narrated video showed a statistically significant increased vaccination intention when compared to the control, which is not altogether surprising, given previous research and anecdotal healthcare experiences. The female-narrated video showed a non-significant increase when all participants of this group were considered. When political views were adjusted, conservative participants showed a decreased intention towards vaccination especially previously undecided. With removal of the conservative subgroup, the female and male narrated videos both showed increased vaccination intention.

Recent reports in the [press](#) show that White and male conservatives constitute a large fraction of those with vaccine hesitancy/resistance. This study provides evidence that the gender of the information purveyors may significantly influence the opinions of the recipients. Meanwhile, the vaccine hesitancy/resistance movement has plenty of male advocates in the form of conservative nightly cable news hosts, some of whom have gone on record as [stating](#) that the vaccines might not work, and the government is “simply not telling you that.” And we wonder why people are still dying of covid-19.

—Christopher Sampson, MD, FACEP

POLICY BRIEFING

Medicare sequestration suspended through 2021.

President Biden signed a [law](#) on Wednesday which will suspend the 2 percent Medicare cut mandated by typical budgetary sequestration. Sequestration is the result of pay-as-you-go legislation which enforces across-the-board cuts to government spending if other savings cannot be obtained when passing new spending laws. Medicare payments to healthcare providers were exempted from this process at the beginning of the covid-19 crisis but expired two weeks ago, on April 1st. However, bipartisan agreement in the Senate late last month allowed for the continued suspension of the cuts until January 1, 2022.

Healthcare providers are expected to receive payments without the cuts backdated to the beginning of April. The House of Representatives had initially passed a similar bill which would have also suspended a 4 percent Medicare cut currently slated to go into effect next year, however this provision was not able to pass the narrowly divided Senate. It is expected that the 4 percent payment reduction will be the subject of negotiations later this year.

—Jordan M. Warchol, MD MPH

Kimi Chernoby, MD, JD, Policy Section Founder, Joshua Niforatos, MD Research Section Editor, Frederick Milgrim, MD, Editor-at-Large, Joshua Lesko, MD Lead Policy Analyst, Barb Cunningham, Copy-editor, Benjy Renton, Thread-of-the-Week, Anna Fang, Week-in-Review. Megan Davis, social media. Kane Elfman PhD, Publishing and Design. Jeremy Samuel Faust MD MS, Editor-in-Chief. <http://www.brief19.com/> Twitter: [@brief_19](#) submissions@brief19.com. Brief19 is a daily executive summary of covid-19-related medical research, news, and public policy. It was founded and created by frontline emergency medicine physicians with expertise in medical research critique, health and public policy.