

Module 4. Cultural Competences - Topic 1. Advocacy

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the conversation about vaccines has dramatically changed. The pandemic has also been accompanied by an 'infodemic', an epidemic of misinformation. Vaccines have been drawn into this maelstrom of rumours, conspiracy theories and other misinformation. Thanks to widespread misinformation, some people parents of young children in particular have become suspicious of lifesaving immunizations.

Nurses and medical assistants have a key role to play in improving vaccine acceptance and fostering a culture of immunization in the practice as they are in contact with parents throughout the office visit.

2. AIMS

The aim of this tool is to empower participants for vaccine promotion and advocacy of the rights of population in regard to vaccination matters.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this training, the participants will be able to:

- To enhance skills of vaccine promotion to clients and in community the benefits of the vaccine, the safety of vaccination, to combat misinformation, myths and fear of the vaccine and boost vaccine acceptance among clients and population.
- To empower for advocacy the rights relating to vaccination matters of the staff and clients in health and social care settings.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Concepts and definitions

Health advocacy

Health advocacy is a strategy to promote health and access to quality health care at the individual and community levels.

Health advocates support and promote the rights of the patient in the health care arena, help build capacity to improve community health and enhance health policy initiatives focused on available, safe and quality care.

In the policy arenas, health advocates work for positive change in the health care system, improved access to quality care, protection and enhancement of patient's rights, using mass and multi-media, direct political lobbying and community mobilization.

Advocacy is a core value for nurses and doctors (*Mason et al., 2020*). The health professionals have a major responsibility to act as advocates for public health at all levels in society but also institutions like public health associations, patients' organizations, private sector and NGOs are involved in health advocacy.

Patient advocates

There may be a distinction between Patient advocates, who work specifically with or on behalf of individual patients and families, and Health advocates, whose work is more focused on communities, policies or the system as a whole.

Patient advocates provide direct and personalized services to patients and/or their family. The patient advocates' role is to assist, educate and support patients and their families so they are able to make appropriate healthcare decisions for their specific situation. Health advocates assist patients to

navigate the healthcare system in medical settings, insurance, legal and administrative areas or during their long-term or chronic care.

Patient advocates include nurses, physicians, physician assistants, social workers, case managers, hospital administrators, patient care coordinators but also insurance providers, home aid workers, as well as lawyers among others.

Patient advocacy is developing as a profession, from the courses specific of health advocacy to long certificate programs, and also master programs.

Vaccine advocacy

Vaccine advocacy is "the promotion of the best scientific knowledge, moral attitudes, and public health practice with regard to vaccination" (*Balinska, 2004*).

The goal of the vaccine advocacy is to boost the vaccine acceptance addressing causes of hesitancy in different populations and helping populations might to get the vaccine.

Vaccine hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy is a delay in acceptance, or refusal, of vaccines despite the availability of vaccine services.

The term covers refusals to vaccinate, delaying vaccines, accepting vaccines but remaining uncertain about their use, or using certain vaccines but not others.

Myths, misinformation and disinformation spread by the anti-vaccination movement lead to vaccine hesitancy.

4.2. What the research says on the topic

15 Practices to Improve Vaccination Program Effectiveness by Reaching the People Most at Risk. (2020). Prevent Epidemics. Retrieved 12 February 2023, from https://cities4health.org/assets/library-assets/115_pe_15-practices-to-improve-vaccination-effectiveness_fact-sheet_0521_rev-a_v3.pdf

There are large disparities in vaccine uptake; racial and ethnic minorities, particularly rural populations and people with certain political perspectives.

The document presents vaccination strategies to reach the people at greatest risk focus on equity and allocation, community engagement and access, and communication and community education.

Schmitzberger, F. F., Scott, K. W., Nham, W., Mathews, K., Schulson, L. B., Fouche, S., Berri, N., Shehab, A., Gupta, A., Salhi, R. A., Kamdar, N., Bouey, J., & Abir, M. (2021). Identifying Strategies to Boost COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance in the United States. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1446-1.html

Strategies to boost Covid 19 vaccine acceptance grouped within the World Health Organization's "three Cs" model of confidence, complacency, and convenience.

Strategies for promoting vaccine acceptance and vaccine coverage may include interventions like:

- Expand vaccination access at the community level through various services.
- Increase awareness, knowledge, and dissemination of accurate vaccination information.
- Address conspiracy theories, misinformation, and disinformation through constant and consistent truth-telling and myth-busting public health campaigns.
- Develop communication strategies that use personal narratives and emphasize the "why" of vaccination.
- Employ multiple vaccination-acceptance-boosting strategies directed at more than one level of engagement among hesitant populations.
- Tailor vaccination-acceptance-boosting messages, messengers, and messaging platforms to a particular community's root causes of hesitancy.
- Develop and implement unified federal, state, and local vaccination campaigns and initiatives that are apolitical.

- Identify strategies to boost vaccine acceptance among those with political, religious, or conspiratorial reasons for vaccine avoidance, and individuals who may identify with the anti-vaccination movement that existed prior to COVID-19.
- Foster a sense of belonging and community associated with vaccination to replace the appeal of endorsing conspiracy theories.
- Leverage technology to promote vaccinations, such as convenient, "smart" scheduling and tailoring messages via text-messaging to those who have not yet been reached.
- Prioritize research and further evaluation of effective strategies to overcome hesitancy in hard-to-reach populations and to inform vaccination-acceptance efforts in the ongoing COVID-19 and future pandemics.
- Develop and implement vaccination programs through public-private partnerships.

***Share4Rare toolkit for patient advocacy.* (n.d.). Share4Rare. Retrieved 12 February 2023, from <https://www.share4rare.org/library/share4rare-toolkit-patient-advocacy/share4rare-toolkit-patient-advocacy>**

A wide-ranging number of interventions fall under patient advocacy:

- Defending the rights of a patient;
- Education of patients and their families;
- Education of their healthcare providers;
- Support and information;
- Collaboration and sharing;
- Patient representation;
- Building awareness;
- Access to healthcare;
- Access to medicines and technologies.

The Toolkit incorporates tools and methods in the areas of education, communication, research, management and strategy, together with suitable 'how-to' guidelines, downloadable tool templates (<https://www.share4rare.org/library/share4rare-toolkit-patient-advocacy/advocacy-tool-templates>) and advocacy resources (<https://www.share4rare.org/library/share4rare-toolkit-patient-advocacy/advocacy-resources>).

Yale Institute of Global Health and the UNICEF Demand for Immunization. (2020) Vaccine Messaging Guide. Retrieved 12 February 2023, from <https://www.unicef.org/documents/vaccine-messaging-guide>

In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a massive increase in vaccine misinformation having a significant role in perpetuating vaccine hesitancy. The challenge is to counter misinformation in effective ways and to ensure people can find reliable, trusted information.

Combating misinformation about the vaccine and educating people about the benefits of vaccination are the keys to increase widespread vaccine uptake.

The guide is intended for public health professionals, communicators, advocates and anyone else who wishes to create pro-vaccine content to motivate people

Healthcare providers, nurses, doctors and health Leaders are the key persons most likely to influence decisions on whether to take the vaccine, because they are in contact direct with patients.

Vaccine decisions may be influenced by cognitive biases, thoughts and feelings but also by social norms, beliefs, experiences, fears, moral values, ideology, cultural identity, worldview.

Increasing vaccine coverage is not as simple as educating people about the benefits of vaccination. Communication is important to influence vaccination decisions. Communications objectives may include:

- Providing information or reminders on eligibility, access to and affordability of vaccines;
- Reminding people why to vaccinate;
- Increasing the salience of a disease, paired with messages that increase self-efficacy and response efficacy;
- Using “verbal defaults” to frame immunization as a routine act (once efficacy and safety of the vaccine has been established);
- Addressing common questions or new concerns;
- Countering miss/disinformation.

Pro-vaccine communications should be evidence-based, context-specific, and culturally appropriate.

Dada, D., Djiometio, J. N., McFadden, S. M., Demeke, J., Vlahov, D., Wilton, L., Wang, M., & Nelson, L. E. (2022). Strategies That Promote Equity in COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake for Black Communities: A Review. *Journal of Urban Health, 99*(1), 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-021-00594-3>

Vaccine advocacy is not limited at the clinical settings. Approaches beyond direct contact with clients are needed to influence population vaccine uptake. These include street outreach, social media, partnerships with social influencers, and collaboration with professional organizations.

The wider role of healthcare providers is to link more broadly with communities through communication channels such as social media, outreach as providers outside of the traditional settings such as clinics and office looking to add non-traditional sites such as churches, and also becoming equal partners with trusted community leaders.

5. LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Patient advocate for vaccine and immunization (duration: 20 minutes):

1. Watch the video *What Does a Patient Advocate Do?* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOAgmQFhjYA>). This video presents the job description of the patient advocates and explains how they help individuals and families navigate the healthcare maze.
2. Imagine that you are a patient advocate for vaccination and immunization. Create a short list with some interventions to educate and support the patient and family to make appropriate immunization decisions and also to assist him/her to uptake the vaccine.
3. Share with your colleagues your list and comment the peers' lists.

* You may read more on the book: *Vaccine Messaging Guide* at <https://www.unicef.org/media/93661/file/Vaccinemessagingguide.pdf>

Resources to be used for the module learning activities:

No.	Title and description of the resource	Type	Language of resource	Learning, training, assessment and evaluation activities	Access URL / download
1.	What Does a Patient Advocate Do?	Video 2'30"	English*	Individual learning Self-reflection	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOAgmQFhjYA

2.	Vaccine Messaging Guide, 2020.	Book	English	Individual learning	https://www.unicef.org/media/93661/file/Vaccinemessagingguide.pdf
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*Subtitles auto-generated in all languages

6. ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Self-assessment Quiz (duration: 5 minutes):

Choose the right answer to the following questions. If you need, you may review the Learning Tool **4.1 Advocacy** available at <https://iene11.eu/learning-tools/>.

1. What is the distinction between Patient advocates and Health advocates:
 - a) Patient advocates are whose work is more focused on communities, policies or the system as a whole.
 - b) Patient advocates provide direct and personalized services to patients and/or their family, assist patients to manage with different healthcare issues.
 - c) Patient advocates are only those have qualification in advocacy.

2. Vaccine hesitant person is:
 - a) A person who believes that the vaccines may have side effects.
 - b) A person who is afraid of the vaccine.
 - c) A person who refuses to be vaccinated or delay in acceptance of vaccine.

3. What are the "three Cs" of the World Health Organization's model Strategies to boost Covid-19 vaccine acceptance:
 - a) Confidence, complacency and convenience.
 - b) Confidence, complacency and trust.
 - c) Confidence, complacency and acceptance.

7. REFERENCES

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