A Targeted Approach Utilizing Medical Student Led Vaccine Counseling Increases Uptake of COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnant Patients

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INTRODUCTION

- Although pregnant patients are at significantly higher risk for worse outcomes from COVID-19 infection, only 25% of pregnant individuals nationwide had received any COVID-19 vaccination by the summer of 2021, despite data demonstrating the safety of vaccination for both mother and fetus.
- Bellevue Hospital serves populations less likely to be vaccinated and disproportionately more likely to face increase morbidity and mortality due to COVID-19 infection.
- During their pre-clinical curriculum, medical students have limited interactions with patients, minimal experience with electronic medical records, and as of yet, no dedicated exposure to telemedicine.

METHOD: MEDICAL STUDENT TRAINING

- Recruited NYU medical students volunteers participated in a Zoom based training with OB/GYN attending faculty. This training focused on:
  - Current evidence surrounding COVID-19 vaccination and pregnancy
  - Using Epic to identify patients eligible for counseling and to properly document counseling sessions
  - Maintaining HIPAA compliance while providing care via telemedicine
  - Incorporating certified interpreting services into clinical workflow
- Volunteers were provided written reference materials following training sessions.

RESULTS: DEMOGRAPHICS

- 24 NYU medical students participated in this pilot program which ran from 10/2021-2/2022. The majority (75%) were pre-clinical students.
- Of the patients we successfully reached, 118 individuals were found to be eligible for vaccination at time of counseling. The majority (62.7%) had never received any COVID-19 vaccination.
- Counseling was conducted in 8 different languages, the vast majority in English or Spanish.
- As anticipated, our population was primary composed of individuals who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino (66.9%).

CONCLUSIONS

- This pilot program demonstrated that a targeted approach to vaccine counseling and appointment coordination significantly increased the uptake of COVID-19 vaccination in an at-risk population of pregnant patients.
- The incorporation of medical student volunteers provides a readily available and knowledgeable cohort of counselors. Through real patient interactions, medical students are able to gain a familiarity with key clinical skills including accessing information and documenting encounters in Epic, using interpreter services, and providing care via Telemedicine.

This study offers a standardized, scalable model of care that simultaneously exposes pre-clinical medical students to important aspects of healthcare and increases vaccination uptake in at-risk communities.

REFERENCES