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## Examining Vaccine Hesitancy Trends in an Underserved Population at a Student-Run Free Clinic

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Title: Examining Vaccine Hesitancy Trends in an Underserved Population at a Student-Run Free Clinic

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Introduction:

The global debate surrounding the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines has triggered widespread vaccination hesitancy, impacting not only COVID-19 immunizations but also other vaccines. This study investigates whether a parallel trend exists within a Student-Run Free Clinic (SRFC), focusing on an underserved population disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Methods:

Retrospective analysis was conducted by coordinators of Cass Clinic, a Detroit-based SRFC. Patients included were individuals 18 or older who received the influenza vaccine at Cass Clinic from 2013 to 2022. Data collected through optional pre-vaccination surveys involved 248 individuals divided into "pre-COVID" (2012-2019, n=193) and "post-COVID" (2020-2022, n=55) groups. Demographic details, vaccine concerns, and their impact on the decision to vaccinate were assessed to understand patient decision-making factors and how SRFCs are bridging the gap in providing vaccination care. T-tests and z-tests were used for statistical analysis, with significance set at  $p < 0.05$ .

Results:

Pre-COVID, 42.55% of patients receiving flu vaccination had concerns and post-COVID 15.09% of patients had concerns which demonstrates a significant decrease in vaccine concerns among the Cass patients ( $p=0.00019$ ,  $<0.05$ ).

Conclusion:

Contrary to the global trend, Cass Clinic observed a noteworthy reduction in vaccine hesitancy post-COVID, highlighting the distinctive role of SRFCs in fostering vaccination adherence, especially among vulnerable and underserved populations. This unexpected divergence prompts further investigation into the clinic's effective strategies, contributing valuable insights to public health efforts aimed at promoting vaccination in marginalized communities.

Keywords: Vaccine hesitancy, Student-Run Free Clinic, Pandemic, Underserved community