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Vaccine Hesitancy Among Youth Living with HIV in Detroit

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Vaccine Hesitancy Among Youth Living with HIV in Detroit

Background: During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Americans expressed hesitancy to receive a vaccine due to concerns about the efficacy and the side effects of the vaccine, mistrust in government and health officials, and misinformation spread through media. Persons living with HIV were identified early in the pandemic as being at high risk for morbidity and mortality and we wanted to quantify the extent of hesitancy toward the COVID-19 vaccines as well as toward other vaccines in a high-risk population of youth with HIV. This study is an exploration of vaccination acceptance rates among youth with HIV at one University clinic.

Methods: A retrospective chart review was conducted and analyzed patients who attended the Horizons Clinic at Wayne Pediatrics over a five-year period from January 2017- December 2022. Vaccines documented included the Meningitis ACWY vaccine (Men ACWY), Meningitis B vaccine (Men B), Tetanus vaccine (DTap, TD, Tdap), Human Papilloma Virus vaccine (HPV), COVID-19 vaccines, and annual influenza vaccine (flu).

Results: The charts of 128 youth living with HIV ranging from ages 2 – 26 years were reviewed. Within this group, 19 patients were < 18 years of age and 109 were between 18 – 26 years of age. The sample group included 98 men/boys, 26 women/girls, and 6 transgender women. 94% of the clinic population received the HPV vaccine series, 93% received the tetanus vaccine, and 91% received the MenACWY vaccine. 62% of the clinic population received the MenB vaccine. Only 15% of the overall clinic population received three doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and 5.6% in patients < 18 years of age. Acceptance of any number of COVID-19 dose was 56% of overall clinic patients. Flu vaccine acceptance was 56% of overall patient population receiving an annual flu shot on average. However, rates were higher among patients < 18 years of age at 88.9%.

Conclusions: Vaccine acceptance rates are not declining as a whole but rather with specific vaccines. In this population, rates were higher for the MenACWY, MenB, tetanus, and HPV vaccine. Acceptance rates were lowest for the COVID-19 and annual flu vaccine. This may be due to many factors, such as frequency of vaccines and controversy in media. Vaccine acceptance rates do not correlate with medication acceptance rates within this population. Most patients at the clinic accept antiretroviral medications, with 93% of patients accepting medication and almost half adhering to injectable medications. Further investigation is warranted to analyze specific factors affecting patients' decision to receive vaccines. A better understanding of these factors may help clinicians guide patients in their decision making.