

DEBUNKING MYTHS & MAXIMIZING PARTICIPATION

THE COVID-19 TREATMENT



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Abstract

There has been a significant number of COVID-19 cases, and as of June 14, 2021, there were 33,283,781 cases and 597,195 deaths in the United States alone. There is an urgent need to build trust and debunk conspiracy theories surrounding COVID-19 treatment and vaccination. This report discusses what drives distrust for communities of colors in the United States. It is backed by detailed facts and figures obtained from different studies and surveys. The three vaccines approved by the FDA, for prevention of COVID-19 in addition to prevention of severe disease complications and or death, are also discussed further into the report. The report focuses on building trust among the African American community through transparency and partnership – a major task given decades of mistruths and myths about vaccines and medical trials that have circulated among the African-American community. Finally, recommendations are made by Dr. Elana McDonald and Dr. Delana Wardlaw to maximize COVID-19 treatment participation by executing the Covid-19 Firebreak model.

Introduction

In December 2019, a mysterious outbreak of pneumonia occurred in Wuhan, China. On January 9th, 2020, a team of researchers led by Xu Jianguo found the novel Coronavirus as the cause behind the disease. On January 21st, scientists from China confirmed Covid-19 as a human transmissible virus, and by January 31st, the WHO had issued a global health emergency for this outbreak. Since then, the number of Covid-19 cases and deaths have been increasing rapidly.

On March 11th, the WHO declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. According to recent figures by December 23rd, 2020, there were 78,516,787 confirmed cases and 1,727,077 confirmed deaths worldwide.

The biggest victim of all has been the United States. On January 20th, 2020, the state of Washington and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention detected the first Covid-19 patient in the United States. Surprisingly, Covid-19 infection rates increased in the United States more than in other countries. As a result, by February 2nd, 2021 there were more than 27,000,000 confirmed covid-19 cases and more than 446,000 confirmed deaths in the United States alone.

People of the United States face the most critical situation in history, and the scenario is even worse for the urban community. The distrust from the Tuskegee experiment is still following them. The African and Latino communities were affected by 1.4 and 1.7 times more than white Americans. Approximately every one out of 800 African Americans and 1150 Latino Americans, have died from Covid-19. CIDRAP news has reported that the African communities are getting Covid-19 three times more than white Americans.

Many significant steps have been taken worldwide to prevent this outbreak, and the United States has also taken massive steps. On February 3rd, 2020, the US declared a public health emergency for Covid. On March 13th, then President Trump announced Covid-19 as a national emergency and banned travel for non-US citizens.

A stay-at-home campaign was launched as a lockdown on March 19th, and a CARES Act was signed on March 27th. Over 132,000 businesses in America closed down temporarily or permanently. The government and other organizations ran several social distancing awareness campaigns.

Just before July 7th, when the US cases reached three million, Dr Fauci warned that Covid-19 patients could increase by 100,000 a day. On August 3rd, the United States agreed to a deal worth \$2.1B with GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur to develop a vaccine.

On August 11th, the Trump administration decided to pay \$1.5 billion to Moderna. By September 14th, Pfizer's BioNTech went to phase 3 trial and was declared 95% effective on November 18th. Finally, on December 11th, the FDA approved Pfizer's BioNTech for emergency use authorization. On December 18th, the FDA also approved the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine as a second emergency use authorization.

vaccine. On February 27, 2021, Johnson and Johnson was the first one dose vaccine approved for emergency use authorization.

Although the United States took many necessary steps, they forget one crucial element: debunking myths and vanishing distrust among the population. The distrust created from the Tuskegee experiment is still prevalent in the urban community. Besides 31% of Black Americans and 25% of Latinos know little or nothing about how vaccines work, meanwhile 41% of Black Americans and 39% of Latinos know little or nothing about how vaccines are developed.

A large portion of the urban community has minimal knowledge about vaccines. They want more transparency about the vaccine development process.

- ☐ Only 4% of Black Americans and 18% of Latino Americans believed in the Trump administration. While there is a new administration, the timing of development of these vaccines remains a factor.
- ☐ Black Americans are more likely to trust persons who look like and have something in common with them.
- ☐ 80% of the Americans, including members of the urban community, express concern about the rapid development and safety of COVID vaccines
- ☐ Prior to vaccine distribution, KFF reported that only 17% of Black Americans were willing to take vaccines even if it is free and determined safe by scientists. As of May 17, 2021 CDC reports 9.1% of African Americans have received at least one dose of the vaccine, compared to 61.2% whites and 14.8% Hispanics

Overall, the urban community is anxious about privacy, safety, and discrimination.

Distrust: An Untold History

The United States Public Health Service and Tuskegee Institute conducted a research "Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male" on 600 African men in 1932.

- Among those 600 men, ages 25-60, 399 had Syphilis (sexually transmitted infection) while 201 did not.
- They were enlisted from Macon County, Alabama because the public health service estimated 35% of the area's population had Syphilis.
- Most of the participants were poor and illiterate.

The purpose of this research was to observe the natural history of untreated Syphilis in the United States. However, the researchers told them that they were being treated for 'Bad Blood,' which referred to various ailments. They told the victims that they are getting free treatments, insurance support, free meals, and other facilities. However, they never informed the participants of the diagnosis. The research time frame was set for six months, but it lasted for 40 years, and the experiment continued until 1972.

On July 25th, 1972, Peter Buxton leaked the internal information to Jean Heller of the Associated Press, who publicly broke the Washington Star story. By that time, only 74 participants were alive. The report claimed that 28 patients had died from Syphilis and 100 from similar complications. In addition, the

disease was transmitted to at least 40 spouses and 19 offspring. In October 1972, the advisory panel concluded that research was unethical and recommended to immediately end the study.

In 1973, Congress held hearings and filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of the victims and a \$10 million out-of-court settlement was decided in 1974. Furthermore, the Tuskegee Health Benefit Program (THBP) was established to provide additional benefits to living participants. A year later, their wives, widows, and offspring were also added to the program.

On May 16th, 1997, President Bill Clinton publicly apologized to the survivors and dead victims' families. The last alive participant passed away in 2004. This 40-year history of lies impacted the trust of African Americans and all races incredibly.

These historical events, coupled with the fear, of being treated like guinea pigs again, has contributed to some of the distrust of the health care system, and ultimately vaccines.

Building Trust: An Essential Task

KFF and ESPN's TheUndefeated.com surveyed 1,769 adults in the United States, including 777 African Americans, from August 20th, 2020, through September 14th, 2020. Some of the findings are:

- 65% of African men and 59% of African women think it is a bad time to live in America.
- 36% of Africans are concerned about financial issues, and 34% are concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 58% of African adults think they were treated unfairly based on their race.
- 6 out of 10 African adults have no or little trust in the health care system.
- Nearly half of 65% of African adults said they would not take the Coronavirus vaccine.
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These results highlight the distrust among many African Americans.

The study shows trust percentage among African Americans, Latin Americans in various institutions and people:

- Dr Fauci 53%, 50%
- The FDA 29%, 41%
- Pharmacies/Clinics 27%, 35%
- Drug Companies 19%, 27%
- The Trump Administration 4%, 18%

Many other surveys and studies show a similar distrust rate among these communities.

Covid-19 conspiracy theories, based on misinformation, also contribute to mistrust. Pew Research Center survey found:

- 71% of Americans have heard the Covid-19 outbreak is planned.
- 8% of those who heard said it is true.
- 20% of those who heard said it is probably true.

- 13% of those who heard said they are not sure.
- 33% of Black Americans said that it is definitely or probably true.
- 34% of Hispanic Americans said that it is definitely or probably true.
- 30% of Americans said that it was created in a Chinese lab.
- 6% of Americans said that it was created accidentally.
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The promotion of misinformation and conspiracy theories must be immediately addressed and debunked consistently. There are also some myths about the Covid-19 outbreak, which are causing significant distrust and fear. Some of them are:

- Covid-19 is like regular flu.
- Coronavirus was created in a Chinese lab.
- Herd immunity can be achieved by persons actually contracting COVID 19.
- Influential people intentionally planned the Covid-19 outbreak.
- Covid-19 is a bioweapon.
- Wearing a mask does not help.
- Vaccines will be approved and tested quickly among the urban population.

Allan Brandt, a Harvard scholar, said “The Tuskegee Study revealed more about the pathology of racism than it did about the pathology of Syphilis”. This statement was a clear indication of the distrust created among African Americans.

Several organizations and experts, including the National Institute of Health, United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Reed Tuckson former Washington D.C. public health commissioner, Dr Anthony Fauci, Dr Elana McDonald, and Dr Delana Wardlaw took efficient measures to remove the distrust among these communities to maximize participation.

Achieving Transparency: An Irresistible Oath

After a whole year of living with the Covid pandemic and every country having introduced strict measures, the infection rate continued to rise quickly. Many believe vaccines is the most effective and efficient way to end the pandemic. The FDA has already approved Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna and Johnson and Johnson as an emergency use authorization COVID-19 vaccine.

What will happen if half of the United States population refuses to participate in the vaccination process? Almost 49% of Americans said they probably or definitely will not. Why? Because they don't know how vaccines are made, what the outcome will be or how their personal information will be used. So, to maximize participation in Covid-19 vaccinations, transparency is critical. Currently, only 61.6% of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated, while another 57% has received one dose of the vaccine. A massive effort is planned to ensure that everyone is vaccinated in the U.S. by the end of the year.

Key facts and information about the FDA approved (Emergency Use Authorization) Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine:

- **Name:** Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine
- **Age:** 12 years of age and older
- **Manufacturer:** Pfizer.
- **Effectiveness:** 95%
- **Dose:** 2 shots (3 weeks apart)
- **Participants:** 45,302 enrolled, 43,125 received 2nd dose (16 years of age and older)
- **Common side effects:** pain, fatigue, headaches, muscle & joint pain, chills, fever, swelling, redness, nausea, malaise, and lymphadenopathy.
- **Vaccination Information:** State/local jurisdiction's Immunization Information System (IIS) or other designated systems.
- **EUA Approval Date:** December 11th, 2020.
- **Ingredients:** lipids (0.43 mg (4-hydroxybutyl) azanediyl) bis(hexane-6,1-diyl) bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 0.05 mg 2[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]- N,N-di tetradecyl acetamide, 0.09 mg 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and 0.2 mg cholesterol), 0.01 mg potassium chloride, 0.01 mg monobasic potassium phosphate, 0.36 mg sodium chloride, 0.07 mg dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate, and 6 mg sucrose. The diluent (0.9% Sodium Chloride Injection, USP) contributes an additional 2.16 mg sodium chloride per dose.

Key information about the FDA approved (Emergency Use Authorization) Moderna Covid-19 vaccine:

- **Name:** mRNA-1273
- **Age:** 18 years of age and older
- **Manufacturer:** Moderna, Inc.
- **Effectiveness:** 94.1%
- **Dose:** 2 shots (4 weeks apart)
- **Participants:** 30,000 enrolled, 25,654 received 2nd dose (18 years of age and older)
- **Common side effects:** Pain, swelling, redness, chills, tiredness, and headache.
- **Vaccination Information:** State/local jurisdiction's Immunization Information System (IIS) or other designated systems.
- **EUA Approval Date:** December 18th, 2020.
- **Ingredients:** messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA), lipids (SM-102, polyethylene glycol [PEG] 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol [DMG], cholesterol, and 1,2-di stearoyl-sn-glycerol-3-phosphocholine [DSPC]), tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride, acetic acid, sodium acetate, and sucrose.

Key information about the FDA approved (Emergency Use Authorization) Janssen Covid-19 vaccine:

- **Name:** Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine
- **Age:** 18 years and older
- **Manufacturer:** Janssen Biotech Inc.,
a Janssen Pharmaceutical Company of Johnson & Johnson
- **Effectiveness:** 66.3% effective
- **Dose:** one shot
- **Participants:** 21,895 individuals 18 years of age and older

- **Common Side Effects:** pain, redness of the skin and swelling at the injection site. headache, feeling very tired, muscle aches, nausea, and fever.
- **Rare Adverse Event:** Thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (TTS) Blood clots involving blood vessels in the brain, abdomen, and legs along with low levels of platelets (blood cells that help your body stop bleeding), have occurred in some people who have received the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine. In people who developed these blood clots and low levels of platelets, symptoms began approximately one to two-weeks following vaccination. Most people who developed these blood clots and low levels of platelets were females ages 18 through 49 years. The chance of having this occur is remote. The vaccine is still recommended by the CDC and FDA as benefits far outweigh risks. Patients should be advised of this rare risk.
- **Vaccine Information:** State/local jurisdiction's Immunization Information System (IIS) or other designated systems.
- **EUA Approval Date:** February 27, 2021
- **Ingredients:** recombinant, replication-incompetent adenovirus type 26 expressing the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, citric acid monohydrate, trisodium citrate dihydrate, ethanol, 2-hydroxypropyl- β -cyclodextrin (HBCD), polysorbate-80, sodium chloride.

The CDC also mentioned five general facts about Covid-19 vaccines:

1. Covid-19 vaccines do not contain the COVID-19 virus and will not give a person Covid-19
2. Covid-19 vaccines will not cause a positive result on Covid-19 viral tests
3. People who have contracted COVID-19 may still benefit from getting vaccinated
4. Getting vaccinated can help decrease transmission, prevent severe complications and death from Covid-19
5. Receiving an mRNA vaccine will not alter DNA

For those who are not willing to take vaccines, proposed non-vaccine approaches include:

- **Drug:** A drug is a substance that is used for medication to treat a specific condition.
- The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Remdesivir (Veklury), an antiviral drug for patients 12 years of age and older and at least 40 kilograms of weight.
- Monoclonal antibodies Casirivimab and Imdevimab combination, Bamlanivimab and Etesevimab combination have been granted emergency use authorization by the FDA to treat non hospitalized patients 12 years and older with mild to moderate symptoms
- Dexamethasone, a corticosteroid, is recommended for certain hospitalized patients requiring supplemental oxygen and or mechanical ventilation

The path for a COVID-19 Vaccine from Research to Emergency Use Authorization Source: The U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Recommendations

Creating Partnerships: An Unavoidable Necessity

A major concern is that 80% of Americans, including all African Americans, have their doubts about quickly approved vaccines. The Covid-19 pandemic introduced some significant problems among the urban communities, including concerns about their safety and privacy. FDA approved the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Janssen vaccines as emergency use COVID-19 vaccines in the United States. However, a specific amount of participation by the public is required to make a positive impact. ~~Most~~ Many communities have witnessed a history of distrust in the government and believe that they will be treated unfairly. In addition, many are influenced by myths and conspiracy theories on social media. The following points need to be addressed with utmost urgency:

- Engage with urban communities of all races
- Build trust
- Debunk myths
- Address conspiracy theories
- Achieve transparency
- Deliver culturally sensitive messages
- Encourage vaccination

Both Dr. Elana McDonald and Dr. Delana Wardlaw advocate the need for a broad range of partnerships with local doctors and other social community groups to maximize Covid-19 treatment participation.

Some proposed steps for creating partnerships are:

- **Local Doctors:** People in the United States believe in doctors of their own communities more often than others. For example, African Americans are three times more likely to visit doctors of their race. Localization also plays a vital role in trusting doctors. People consider their local doctor as a family member, and people trust them. To fight the current situation, local doctors of every community need to work together to create trust and maximize participation in Covid-19 vaccination. Another key partner is the National Medical Association, a 501(c) (3) national professional and scientific organization representing the interests of more than 50,000 African American physicians.
- **BlackDoctor.org:** BDO is the world's largest online health resource specifically targeted towards African Americans. The organization provides essential health and wellness resources for people of color. They are continuously helping their community, which has helped the organization gain the trust of African Americans. Participating in this organization's campaign will help build trust among the African American community during Covid pandemic.
- **HBCUs:** This refers to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including both public and private institutes. There are 101 in total in the US. Of these, 27 offer doctoral programs, 52 offer master's programs, 83 offer bachelor's degree programs, and 38 offer associate degrees. There are some 228,000 students attending these schools. There are many influential graduates of HBCUs, including Vice President Kamala Harris, Martin Luther King Jr, Oprah Winfrey, Ruth J.

Simmons, James Clyburn, and others. Many African Americans consider HBCUs as their trusted ground. By working together, these 101 institutions can bring great results in educating African Americans about Covid-19 vaccination and treatment and can increase participation.

- **Faith-based Organizations:** One of the other critical vehicles to reach the African-American community is through their churches. Throughout communities in the United States, there are megachurches whose congregations range from 10,000 to more than 30,000 African-American members. Led by ~~hugely~~ individuals who are hugely influential in their communities, they have the opportunity to help shape the messaging about the importance of vaccination within their congregations. One key partner is the National Black Church Initiative, representing more than 34,000 African-American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment.
- **Fraternities/Sororities:** Fraternities and sororities, known as Greek Letter Organizations (GLOs) or Greek life, are social organizations located at colleges or universities in the United States. Their interesting features include secret rituals, single-sex membership, residential buildings, identity symbols, and their members' complete profiles. There is a large engagement of the student in these organizations. By working together, Fraternities/sororities can help to fight Covid-19.
- **Civic Organizations:** This refers to any organization focused on uplifting the current status of a particular community. National Civic League, Hudson Guild, Muslim Urban Professional, Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland, American Cancer Society are examples of civic organizations. In terms of increasing participation of a specific group, Civic organizations can have a considerable impact. For instance, NAN (National Action Network) was formed in 1991 to draw national attention to critical issues like racial inequality, police brutality, community profiling. It is prevalent and trusted among several communities. Also, NUL (National Urban League) is a New York-based organization for African Americans to advocate economic and social justice with regional offices around the country. It's the oldest and largest community-based organization of its kind in the country. Add to this the NAACP, the 112-year-old civil rights organizations with 2,200 branches in cities throughout the U.S. To maximize the participation of minorities and specific communities in Covid-19 vaccination, working together with civic organizations is essential.
- **Jack and Jill of America Inc:** It was formed in 1939 by African American mothers to provide a social and cultural environment for their children. The organization represents approximately 40,000 families who can increase participation in the Covid-19 education and vaccination efforts.
- **The Links Incorporated:** It was founded on November 9th, 1946, by Margaret Roselle Hawkins and Sarah Strickland Scott. It is an international, not-for-profit corporation with more than 16,000 professional women of African descent located in 41 states. The members are influential decision-makers and opinion leaders representing the worlds of business, medicine, government, media, academia, philanthropy, the arts, and more. Annually, they impact the lives of more than 3

million people at home and abroad. It is an extremely trusted and influential organization that can help increase African Americans participate in the Covid-19 treatment.

- **Community Health:** Community health care organization provides comprehensive primary medical facilities. It is trusted among urban communities and can help increase participation in the vaccination process.
- **Youth Sports Programs:** There is a large number of young people who engage in sports programs. This significant segment of the population cannot be overlooked during the pandemic. Creating awareness among them will allow for positive results.
- **Trusted Celebrities and Community Leaders:** The Tuskegee experiment caused a lot of distrust among many African Americans. However, many still believe in influential people such as athletes, movie stars, government leaders, and other celebrities of their race more than others. The engagement of celebrities and community leaders is necessary to debunk the conspiracies surrounding Covid-19, build trust, achieve transparency, and maximize participation in the vaccination process.

Solutions Beyond The Vaccine

Along with an aggressive strategy to promote the validity and efficacy of vaccines, Dr. Dr. Elana McDonald and Dr. Delana Wardlaw also agree with Dr. Ravi Starzl, CEO and co-founder of Starzl Research, Adj. Professor at Carnegie Mellon University and grandson of the late Dr. Thomas Starzl who did the first ever liver transplant and is responsible for the modern transplant system suggest a 4-point model to public health during pandemics. The model takes a more holistic approach and accounts for the realities of the population.

The core principles include:

1. Self-care in essential to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

- Adequate sleep
- stress reduction
- Mild to moderate exercise
- Maintaining a healthy diet
- Avoiding excessive alcohol and smoking
- Management of chronic medical conditions

2. Rescue response: Treatments for New Bio Threats & Conditions

We know virus are constantly mutating, but we have to be proactive. When someone becomes seriously ill, a curative treatment to improve the prognosis of the disease is important. **Physicians**

Doctors must continuously work on medical solutions to reduce virus levels, and in turn, speed recovery times. Additionally, diagnosing patients before they get critically ill from one of the rising number of viruses that are expected in the world today will help patients get well quicker – and reduce short- and long-term medical costs.

3. Development of Vaccines Fostering Natural and Herd Immunity

Some vaccines are for immediate use, while others are more long term. Within the firebreak model, using vaccines with long term stability will be beneficial. Natural and herd immunity can be built with a long-term vaccine that will help resist future infectious diseases.

Dr. Elana McDonald and Dr. Delana Wardlaw strongly believe that this public health model in combination with their “Three Ts” philosophy can lead to more effectively alleviating the Covid 19 crisis and prepare us for any future challenges.

- Trust: That Black physicians must become trusted messengers who provide accurate medical information and empower patients to be advocates for their own health.
- Translate: Building trust, translates that into action. In this case, convincing tens of millions of African Americans in this country to get vaccinated.
- Transform: Vaccination will lead to decreased destruction and death from COVID 19, ultimately improving the overall quality of life.

Conclusion

The history and recommendations in this White Paper offer a framework to implement Dr. Wardlaw and Dr. McDonald’s “Three Ts” philosophy. To fulfil the above steps, the following requirements need to be met:

- Community engagement
- Create partnerships
- Deliver accurate information
- Create awareness
- Community leaders' involvement
- Explain vaccine fundamentals and benefits
- Local physicians' summit
- Address conspiracies and misinformation
- Explain personal data usage

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