

CULTURE & VACCINE HESITANCY

Considerations for a Sensitive Discussion

Vaccine hesitancy can vary depending on the era, location and specific vaccine in question. One key factor contributing to vaccine hesitancy is lack of confidence, which often relates heavily to culture. This is why many communities may not be comfortable talking about vaccines, and we need to understand and respect their experiences.

Lack of confidence in a vaccine relates to mistrust in:

- *the efficacy and safety of the vaccine*
- *the system that delivers the vaccine, including its healthcare workers*
- *the motivations of policymakers who support and encourage the vaccine*

HISTORY OF UNETHICAL & BIASED MEDICAL TREATMENT

Ongoing racism in healthcare and the memory of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study – a 1932-1972 clinical study conducted on African Americans under the guise of free healthcare – have left many unable to trust public health initiatives, including vaccines.



EFFECTS ON IMMIGRATION STATUS

Undocumented immigrants and their families may be concerned about the risk involved in sharing personal information at vaccination sites. Other immigrants are worried over their future ability to attain a Green Card or citizenship under the public-charge rule, even though it has been rescinded.

RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS

Some religions have objections to vaccines based on the moral issue of using human cells in production. Other religious communities, such as Muslims, place restrictions on what dietary and medicinal substances are permissible in the body.



INTERNATIONAL SUSPICIONS

For more than 30 years, parts of Asia and Africa have remained wary of vaccines. Theories exist that Western nations are using these vaccines to sterilize non-Western communities, or conversely to infect them with other diseases like HIV/AIDS.



The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. (2018, January 10). Cultural perspectives on vaccination. The history of vaccines.

World Health Organization. (2017). Vaccination and trust.

