

Posters to address influenza and RSV vaccine hesitancy and misinformation in ambulatory care

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Introduction

Vaccine hesitancy remains a growing issue that became even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people get information regarding safety and efficacy of vaccines from online sources, which are rarely written at appropriate health literacy levels and contribute to the spread of misinformation and increase skepticism about vaccines.¹ These issues contribute to an overall decline in vaccination rates and increased risk of public health crises.²

Initiative Goals

- Create posters that are visually appealing and pique the interest of patients arriving for acute and well visits at a large ambulatory care clinic.
- Provide education to correct misinformation about influenza and RSV vaccines.
- Prompt conversations between patients and providers to increase uptake of these respiratory vaccines.

Methods

Faculty from the MCPHS School of Pharmacy worked together with final year pharmacy students to develop accessible posters with appropriate health-literate information and visuals to place in a large ambulatory care clinic (waiting rooms and exam rooms) to provide accurate information to patients, encouraging them to inquire about and request vaccines during their appointments. Pharmacy students and faculty were also available in the clinic to answer questions regarding the vaccines for patient and providers. QR codes were provided on posters to direct patients to patient-friendly CDC resources. Patient and provider feedback was collected over 4 weeks.

Results

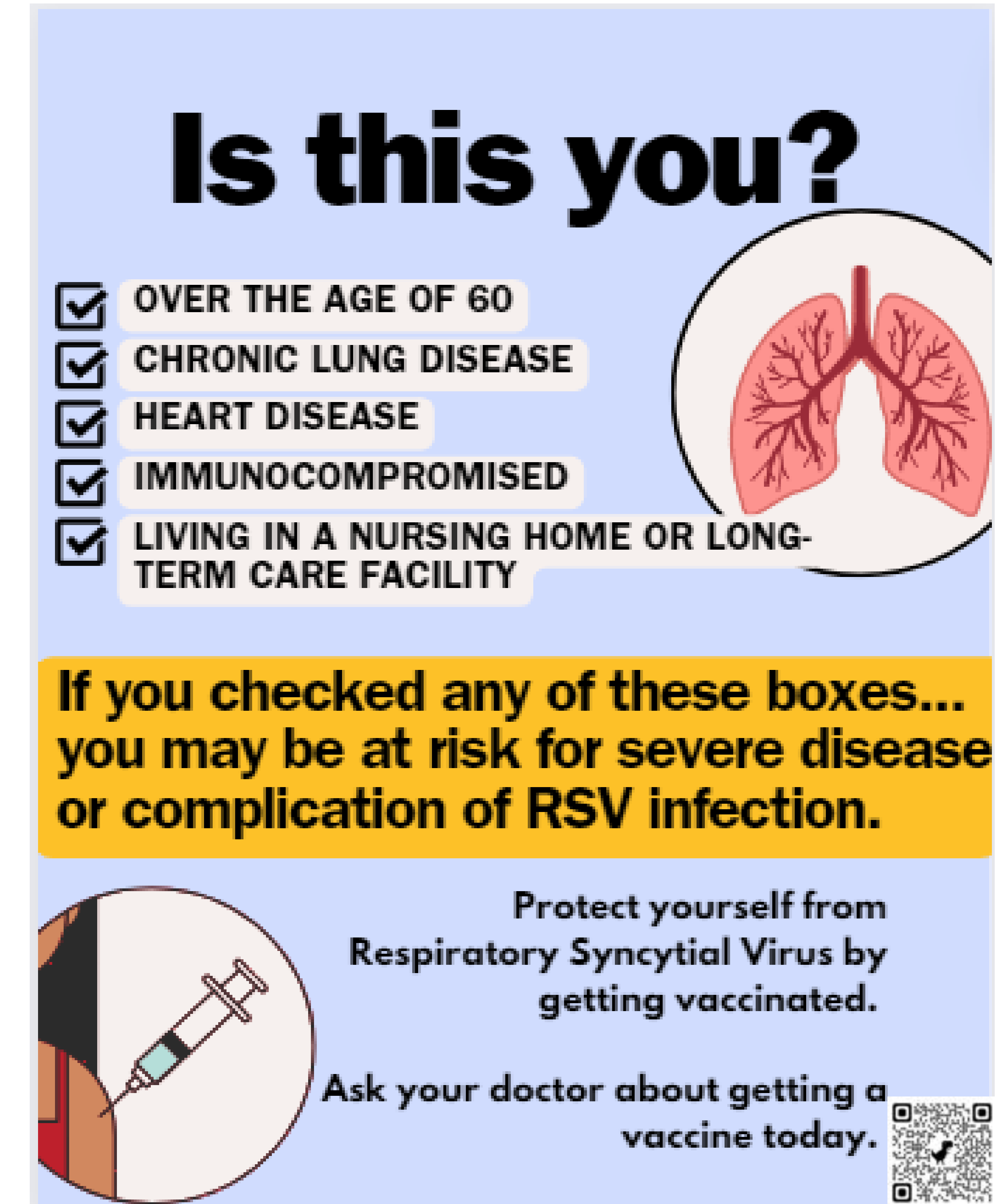
Patient responses

- “I saw the poster in the waiting room and want to ask about a flu shot. Is it too late to get one?”
- I haven’t heard of RSV and I am over 60 like the poster said – can I talk to someone about the vaccine?”

Attending Physician and Pharmacy Observations

- Providers at the clinic estimated a 10% increase in requests for influenza vaccines from last year, prompted in part by poster information.
- Providers estimated a 25% increase in requests for information on the RSV vaccine compared to 6 weeks prior to the poster availability.
- Providers stated that overall they responded to more requests for information on the safety and efficacy of vaccines during the 4 weeks.
- MCPHS pharmacist and students responded to 50 requests for vaccine information over the 4 week period, compared to 5 requests in 4 weeks prior to the poster availability.

Results



Discussions/Conclusions

While there are many factors that influence vaccine hesitancy and skepticism, misinformation and health literacy are important factors. The posters that were made available in waiting rooms and exam rooms did prompt a significant number of patient conversations with primary care providers and pharmacy over the course of the 4 weeks that were surveyed. It is difficult to tell if these conversations actually increased the rates of vaccination since the RSV vaccine is not available at this clinic; patients are referred to their pharmacy to receive the vaccine.

However, conversations with pharmacy included topics such as vaccine safety, efficacy, ingredients, relation to autism diagnoses, allergic reactions, common and expected side effects, and risks of receiving multiple vaccines in one day for both children and adults. The presence of these posters increased opportunities for both providers and pharmacists to provide education at an appropriate level of health literacy on common misconceptions about vaccines and an opportunity to reduce skepticism by providing factual information specific to the patient's concerns.

References

1. Al-Uqdah L, Franklin FA, Chiu CC, Boyd BN. Associations Between Social Media Engagement and Vaccine Hesitancy. *J Community Health*. 2022 Aug;47(4):577-587. doi: 10.1007/s10900-022-01081-9. Epub 2022 Mar 25. PMID: 35332393; PMCID: PMC8947854.
2. World Health Organization. Health Topics. July 2022. <https://www.who.int/news/item/15-07-2022-covid-19-pandemic-fuels-largest-continued-backslide-in-vaccinations-in-three-decades>