

# **Abstract: A Qualitative Analysis of COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy**

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## **Introduction & Background**

Vaccine hesitancy refers to the delay in acceptance or refusal of a vaccination, and it has been a growing problem throughout the world, with outbreaks of preventable diseases persisting when vaccination rates are not high. SARS-CoV-2 has been the pathogen responsible for the current global pandemic with the first case being traced back to December 2019. As of March 2021, the United States has issued FDA Emergency Use Authorizations for multiple COVID-19 vaccines. However, COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy is a developing issue and many factors influencing it have not been identified. The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy to promote greater vaccine uptake.

## **Methods**

An audio conference, via Zoom, set up in a focus group format was used to collect qualitative data from participants about their opinions of the vaccine. Participants were recruited via email and fliers at the public health departments in the Saint Louis, Missouri, and Edwardsville, Illinois regions. Participants had to choose between 3 groups for enrollment (Students, Healthcare, Neither). During the focus groups, participants were asked to respond to a series of 3 open-ended questions designed to assess vaccine hesitancy. Focus groups responses were recorded and analyzed by the investigator.

## **Results**

14 of the 23 participants reported the intention to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The participants addressed a wide range of concerns about the vaccine (immunity, side effects, development); however, all the participants stated they believed it is important for people to receive the vaccine. Participants discussed influences that have affected their attitudes towards the vaccine.

## **Discussion**

Identification of factors affecting vaccine hesitancy is a crucial step for healthcare providers to properly educate their patients about the vaccine; thus, increasing vaccine uptake. Reduction of mortality and morbidity rates from COVID-19 requires vaccination rates to be high.