

The Project Surgery – Dr. Farzana Hussain

The
Strategy
Unit.



Overview

Reference: 17

Location:

Newham, London

Target Group: Over-65s

Initiative type: Vaccine
question clinic

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Top Tip

Listen to your patients and reach out to them.

Why is this important to us?

I'm a GP at The Project Surgery in Newham, an area that had one of the highest Covid-19 death rates in the country during the first lockdown. It is also an economically deprived area where 74% of people are BAME.

We found that of our over-70s, only 50% of our patients were taking up their vaccines. We wanted to see why the attendance was so poor. We found that out of the 50% that had attended, all of them were Caucasian. All but one of those that hadn't attended were BAME.

What are we doing?

Initially our numbers were small enough that I could call those who had declined their vaccine. It was interesting some of the information that I got from the phone calls, most of it was not outright resistance, but more fear about the vaccine. Questions like "how can this be a safe vaccine when it's been rolled out so quickly compared to other vaccines in the past?" and "if I have had Covid-19, do I still need the vaccine?". These are simple questions that people were not getting the opportunity to ask.

There were some community-specific factors. People from the Black African and Caribbean community were more resistant due to a historical distrust of the health service. For the Eastern European community there was also mistrust based on how the government had handled the pandemic more widely. With the over-65s it was concerns about fertility of younger members of their family. There were also concerns from Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs over whether there were animal products used in the vaccine.

Who is involved?

When over-65's turned down the vaccine to our reception team, that is when I was intervening. We now have a dedicated 'Covid champion' offering advice in our practice.

What works for us?

Listen to your patients and reach out to them. Ask them if they have any questions or concerns. Look at your figures, but don't just worry about your figures. Only about one in five agreed to take the vaccine at the end of our phone calls. However, I started doing this at the beginning of January and **over the months, the practice reached over 80% vaccination of our over-80s and 70% for our over-70s.** We don't think this is solely down to our intervention.

We don't want people to feel that they can't voice their concerns because they feel like they are letting society down. We need to let people know that it's alright to feel anxious, but we also need to present them with the facts.

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