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Original Article

Mixed-methods examination of attitudes and behaviors related to COVID-19 vaccines among parents of children with autism and autistic adults

Published in the Peer-reviewed Journal

Vaccine

The full article can be found here:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2024.01.011>

Key Terms

Vaccine hesitancy: Delayed acceptance or refusal of vaccination.

Household vaccination status: The proportion of eligible household members who received at least one COVID-19 vaccine.

Attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccines: Degree to which participants reported trusting the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines.

Why was this study conducted?

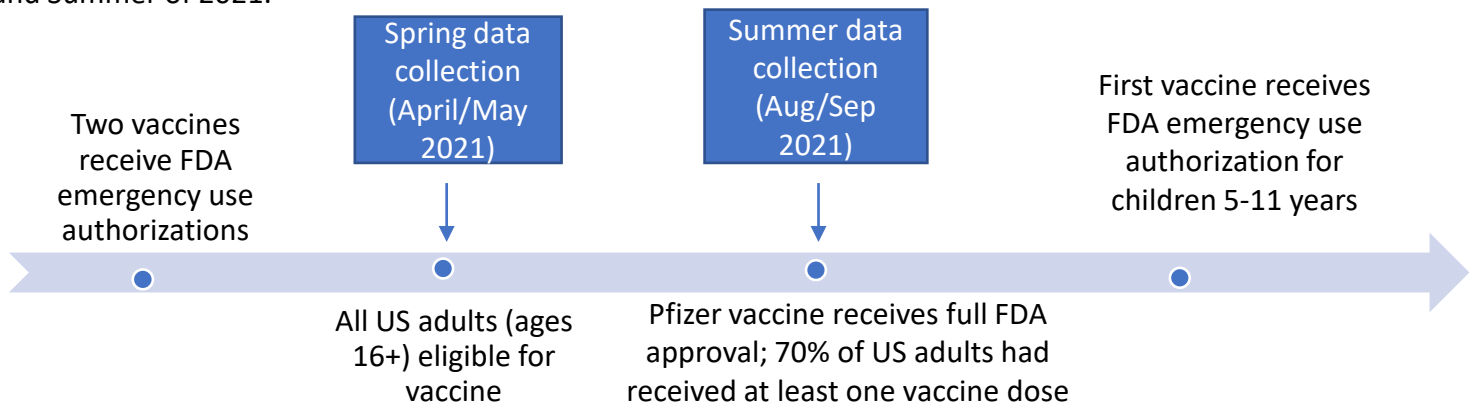
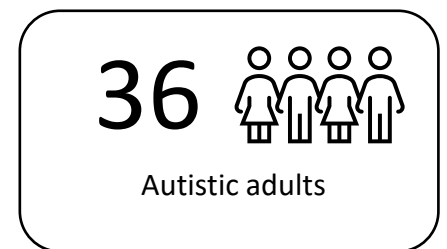
- Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) vaccine distribution was met with vaccine hesitancy or refusal by a substantial portion of the US population.
- Heightened vaccine hesitancy among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) predates the pandemic due to a now retracted and discredited article that linked ASD to the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella vaccine.
- There is a lack of research on vaccine attitudes among autistic adults. Based on self-advocates and popular media sources, autistic adults may have opposing views to vaccine-hesitant parents.

Study Objective

To explore attitudes and behaviors related to COVID-19 vaccines among parents of children with ASD and autistic adults.

What did the study involve?

Participants responded to questions about household vaccination status, plans to vaccinate their children (parent sample), and five questions designed to assess beliefs and attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccines in Spring and Summer of 2021.

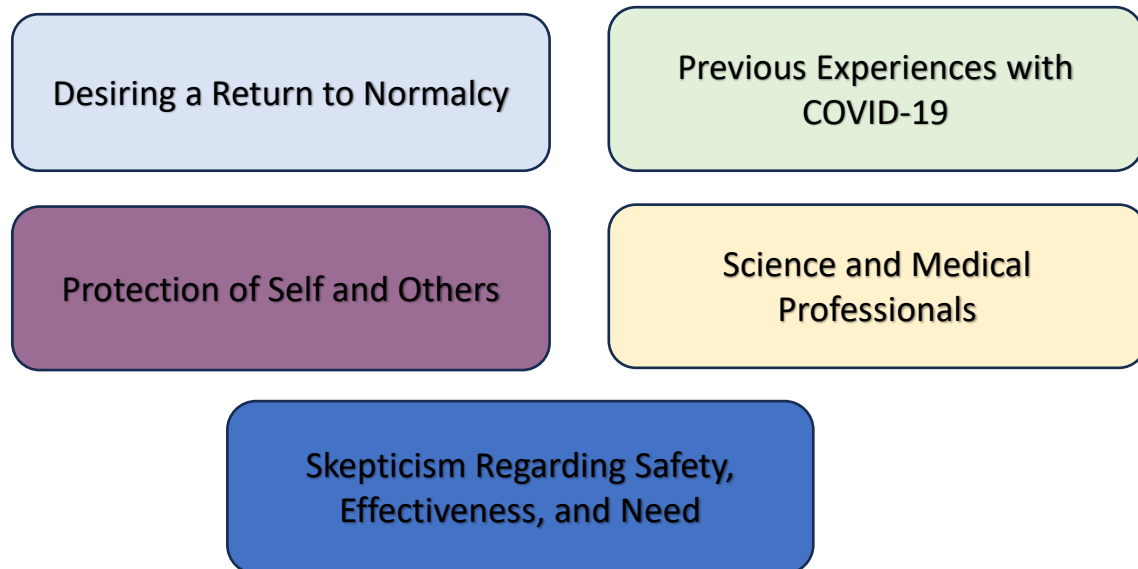




What were the main study findings?

- For both autistic adults and parents of children with ASD, household vaccination status was consistent with or higher than the general population of Arizona and the US at each time point.
- Autistic adults' attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccines were more positive than attitudes of parents of children with ASD.
- Attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccines became more positive over time in both samples.

Themes that influenced attitude and decisions related to vaccination:



What were the study's conclusions?

- Together with other emerging studies, findings suggest relatively positive attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccines among the autism community.
- Consistent with the general population, there was a sizeable minority of participants in both samples who reported that they did not plan to receive a COVID-19 vaccination, indicating a need for continued public health education efforts.
- Concerns about a link between vaccines and autism were scarcely mentioned in responses to open-ended questions. This may indicate that decisions related to COVID-19 vaccines were not influenced by misinformation suggesting an autism-vaccine link.

Original Article Citation

Mitchell, M. M., Klott, A., Scholtes, J., Braden, B. B., Smith, C. J., Matthews, N. L. (2024). Mixed-methods examination of attitudes and behaviors related to COVID-19 vaccines among parents of children with autism and autistic adults. *Vaccine*, 42, 937-944. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2024.01.011>

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