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MAYA HEALTH ALLIANCE WUQU'KAWOQ Understanding vaccine acceptance in Indigenous populations in the Central Highland of Guatemala

Nadine Ann Skinner, PhD, MPA Research Associate Digital Medic Stanford Center for Health Education

Anne Kraemer Diaz, MA Executive Director Maya Health Alliance /Wuqu' Kawoq

UCSF Institute for Global Health Sciences

Study Team

Organization	Team Members
Stanford University, Stanford Center for Health Education, Digital Medic	Nadine Ann Skinner, PhD, MPA, Research Associate Jamie Johnston, PhD, MPP, Research and Evaluation Director
Maya Health Alliance/ Wuqu' Kawoq	Emily Lopez, Manager of Awards and Partnerships Anne Kraemer Diaz, MA, Executive Director/ Co-founder
University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)	Nadia Diamond-Smith, PhD, Assistant Professor Lucia Abascal-Miguel, MD, PhD student Kelly Sanders, MD, MS, Technical Lead Kathryn B. Vosburg, MPH, Associate Director

COVID-19 Vaccine Context in Guatemala

- Guatemala: Culturally diverse population, millions who identify as Indigenous Maya BUT the health care system in Guatemala does not serve this population well.
- As of February 2022, the country's COVID-19 vaccination rate is less than 30%.
- COVID-19 vaccination rates are especially low among Indigenous populations in Chimaltenango, Sacatepéquez and Suchitepéquez.

Given these populations are at high risk for severe disease outcomes from COVID-19, we aimed to better understand why these groups are not accessing COVID-19 vaccines.

Purpose & Research Questions



Our study has five main aims:

- 1. <u>Understand</u> how the COVID-19 vaccine is perceived by the Indigenous Maya population in the Central Highland of Guatemala
- 2. <u>Determine</u> which myths/misinformation exist within the community
- 3. <u>Develop</u> an understanding of where people seek vaccine information
- 4. <u>Identify</u> trusted sources of messaging for Indigenous community members
- 5. <u>Understand</u> how people prefer to receive health information, including areas such as language, format, platform.

Methods

- 8 Focus Group Discussions with community members
- 16 in-depth Interviews with community health workers, nurses, and physicians



Analysis

Translated transcripts and notes from Spanish or Kaqchikel to English

Conducted a rapid analysis using a priori codes

Identified emergent key themes and revised to include both inductive and deductive codes using constant comparative methods

Analyzed interview transcripts and re-coded by two members of the research team

Perception of the COVID-19 Vaccine in the Central Highland of Guatemala



- Significant access barriers:
 - long delays due to supply issues
 - lack of information about dosing schedules/vaccination dates
 - confusion about eligibility
- Respondents had concerns about side effects

Myths and Misinformation about the COVID-19 Vaccine in the Central Highland of Guatemala



4 Common Myths:

- 1. Vaccines cause death
- 2. Vaccines implant tracking microchips
- Vaccines cause infertility in both sexes
- 4. Vaccines are "against the will of God" or "will cause you to become marked by the Devil"

Trusted Vaccine Information for Indigenous Communities in the Central Highland of Guatemala





• Respondents noted:

(1) High yield messages
supported vaccine safety, focused
on community members who
were safely vaccinated,
encouraged vaccination as a right
and responsibility for the
community's health

(2) Great need for messages to be in K'iche' and Kaqchikel - the lack of health information in these languages as a barrier for many community members!

Implications of Findings

- Lack of information available in local languages and confusion over changes to vaccine availability/prioritization increases fear and mistrust in the vaccine and public health systems.
- This makes the population especially vulnerable to myths and misinformation.
- Myths and misinformation must be understood within local cultural, political, and historical circumstances.
- Increasing vaccine acceptance requires integrating local understanding, cultural contexts, and languages into messaging.
- Campaigns would benefit by providing information in Indigenous languages.

Next Steps with the Vaccine Campaign



- Co-developed two sets of social media materials:
 - 1. Vaccine side effects
 - 2. Myths and misinformation about the vaccine
- All messages in Spanish, K'iche, <u>and</u> Kaqchikel
- Used a community-based, human-centered design approach to create health education content
- Content must resonate with local communities

Understanding the Impacts of Vaccine Messaging in the Central Highland of Guatemala



Currently testing: Effectiveness of promoting social media content in local Mayan languages compared to Spanish

(1) Social media campaign: using Facebook Ads & conducting a Brand Lift study to target users geographically, mostly in communities that speak local languages

(1) Conducting pre/post surveys in person before and after rolling out social media campaign

Goal: Develop targeted media campaigns that help increase vaccine uptake in these populations

Key Learnings

The Indigenous Maya population in the Central Highland of Guatemala is at **high risk for vaccine myths and misinformation** due to their historical and current context

There is a critical **need to focus on improving access to vaccine and health information** for this population

Wuqu' Kawoq | Maya Health Alliance is committed to **providing high-impact**, **collaborative**, and culturally and linguistically appropriate health and development programs for Maya populations Thank you for your time Questions? Please email:

Nadine Ann Skinner

Anne Kraemer Diaz