COVID-19 Vaccine Intentions among Métis parents of children under 11 years old in Ontario

BACKGROUND

Indigenous Peoples in Canada are still experiencing the detrimental impacts of both historic and ongoing forms of colonization, including persistent health and economic inequalities, which were further exacerbated and widened during the COVID-19 pandemic. The heightened vaccine hesitancy among Indigenous populations stems from a long history of unethical medical experimentation, involuntary sterilization, and residential school experiences, leading to multifaceted vaccine hesitancy. Although research involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada is growing, Métis-specific health research is still limited in scope. Only one study, which explored Canada parents’ perceptions of COVID-19 vaccination and included Indigenous populations (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), has suggested a lower intention to vaccinate their children if parents speak Indigenous languages. Therefore, there remains a paucity of evidence on COVID-19 vaccine intentions among Métis parents and their willingness to vaccinate their children.

The Métis are one of three constitutionally recognized Indigenous groups in Canada with a unique history, culture, and language. The Métis are the descendants of the children of First Nations women and European men. The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) holds the only recognized registry of Métis people in Ontario.

This study aims to describe the COVID-19 vaccine intentions of MNO citizens who are parents of children under 11 years old.

METHODS

1. **Sample**: 4,164 (30%) of MNO citizens aged 16+ & parents of children aged 6 months - 11 years old.
2. **Methodology**: Cross-sectional study design.

The survey was conducted from May 8 to June 13, 2022.

**RESULTS**

- **4,164 (30%) of MNO citizens completed the survey**
- **1,074 (26%) of respondents are parents of children aged 6 months - 11 years old**
- **Parents’ vaccine perception of COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 6 - 11 years old**
  - Intenders 29%
  - Non-intenders 71%

**Responses from parents**

- Trust in science, vaccine, gov, safety regulations
- Worry about long term effects
- Distrust in science, vaccine, gov, pharma
- Allows child to participate in sports/activities
- Not sure if it is necessary
- COVID-19 does not affect children as severely
- Child wanted the vaccine
- Fear of vaccine
- Not enough research on long term studies done on the vaccines
- The right thing to do
- Disagreement between parents
- Child is afraid of needles
- Protect self & others
- Child can have vaccine
- Unsure
- Intenders
- Non-intenders
- Unsure

**CONCLUSION**

Most MNO citizen parents were willing to vaccinate their children aged 6 months - 4 years and 5 - 11 years against COVID-19.

Concerns around vaccine safety and benefits of COVID-19 vaccine to children arise from parents regardless of vaccine intention.

Health promotion messaging to Métis parents prioritized addressing concerns on safety and potential long term effect based on the findings.

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**REFERENCES**