Let’s talk vaccines

Developing a Communications Toolkit to Support Effective Provider-Parent Conversations

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Background

Parental concerns about the benefits of timely childhood immunization are increasing. Evidence suggests that child health providers are the most important influence on parental immunization decision-making. Effective resources are needed to improve provider-parent communication about vaccines.

Program goals

Based on several years of pilot work using a social marketing approach, Vax Northwest, a public-private partnership in Washington State, developed an intervention designed to help child health providers address parental vaccine concerns. One component of this intervention is a toolkit that illustrates how to address parent’s concerns using clear, empathetic language within the time constraints of a health supervision visit. The toolkit is paired with giveaway items to help spark conversation between parents and providers.

The communication strategies we used to enhance the toolkit include: 1) packaging the tools for ease of use by providers, 2) making parent information more meaningful and easier to understand, and 3) developing an overall messaging brand to help initiate open provider-parent conversations about vaccines.

Evaluation methods & results

The toolkit and giveaway items were distributed to providers in 30 clinics using a physician-led, CME-style training format.

• 278 attendees completed evaluation forms at the training.
• On a scale of 1 ("poor") to 7 ("excellent"), 96% of providers rated the quality of the toolkit at 6 or 7.
• Among 196 providers who shared open-ended comments on what was most useful, 57% suggested the integration toolbox—often commenting that it provided clear, specific language and would be useful at the point of care. Many also commented that the giveaway items would be useful.

Conclusions & implications for research & practice

Parents gave very positive initial reactions to the “Let’s Talk Vaccines” toolkit and brand. Using plain, conversational language and simple, inviting imagery, the “Let’s Talk Vaccines” toolkit gives providers a well-received and replicable playbook for confidently and empathetically engaging in a dialogue with vaccine-hesitant parents. Collaborating with communications experts is a promising strategy for researchers, providers, and public health professionals developing resources to support provider-parent conversations about vaccines. Analyses of primary outcomes—parental vaccine hesitancy and provider self-efficacy in addressing hesitancy—are being evaluated with an ongoing randomized controlled trial.

People are saying—

“The buttons are great conversation starters.”

“The examples of phrases to use are most helpful. Provides concrete ways to have the conversation. Love the handouts/pins/clipboards/etc.”

“Great handouts. Clear ideas and reminders. Good ideas for talking points. Love the logo.”

“Practical, easy-to-use materials.”

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