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a qualitative study
Al-Saudi, Ghuna ; K. Thabit, Abrar ; Jose, Jimmy ; F. Badr, Aisha ; Jaad, Lama ; Kaae, Susanne; Jacobsen, Ramune

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COVID-19 vaccination perceptions among Arabic-speaking minorities in Denmark – a qualitative study

Ghuna Al-Saudi1 ABR K. Thabit2 Jimmy Jose3 Aisha F. Badr2 Lama Jaad2 Susanne Kaae1 Ramune Jacobsen1

1 Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark
2 Pharmacy Practice Department, Faculty of Pharmacy, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
3 School of Pharmacy, University of Nizwa, Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman

1 Introduction & aim

In 2019, the World Health Organization listed vaccine hesitancy as one of the top ten threats to global health (1). Vaccination hesitancy became especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. Surveys had shown that COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy varied across countries, and across population groups within a country, depending on education, employment, or ethnic minority status (2). In Denmark, the COVID-19 infection rates and vaccination coverage was lower in areas with many residents having ethnic minority background (3). No qualitative studies have explored the perceptions of COVID-19 vaccination in ethnic minority communities to help understand the reasons behind the low vaccination rate.

This study aimed to explore COVID-19 vaccination perceptions in Arabic-speaking minorities in Denmark.

2 Methods

Informants
• 16 individuals, varying by age, gender, education, employment, health, and vaccination status were interviewed in Arabic language

Interview guide themes
• Knowledge and sources of information about COVID-19 vaccines
• Perceptions of COVID-19 vaccines’ effectiveness and safety
• Attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccination policies in Denmark
• Importance of the family and the Arabic-speaking environment for the COVID-19 vaccine attitudes and vaccination decisions

Analysis
• Interviews were transcribed verbatim, translated to English and content analyzed

3 Results

Characteristics of the informants

<table>
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<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Covid 19 vaccination status</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
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Knowledge and information sources
The majority demonstrated some knowledge about how vaccines work and what side effects they have. Among official information sources, televised press conferences by the Danish health authorities were mentioned most often. Participants also shared information through social media and in social gatherings within the Arabic-speaking communities both in Denmark and abroad.

“…we always sit and talk and inform each other if we have heard something new. For example, now about the third injection – and what will happen if Denmark makes it a requirement to be vaccinated.”

Perceptions of COVID-19 vaccines’ effectiveness and safety
Perceptions varied from trust in COVID-19 vaccines’ safety and effectiveness to distrust and preferring natural immunity. The majority however were confused. Some said they took the COVID-19 vaccine without knowing why they did it.

Attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccination policies in Denmark
Attitudes varied from total confidence in the Danish authorities, to distrust in authorities’ recommendations and complying with vaccination recommendations only for practical considerations, e.g. travelling. Several were not happy that they had to be vaccinated in the vaccination centers but not in healthcare institutions.

“I would always recommend doing it in the hospital, at the doctor’s office or at the pharmacy instead.”

Importance of the family and the Arabic-speaking environment
Even tough vaccination issues were intensively discussed in Arabic-speaking gatherings, agreements were rarely reached. Due to language barriers, some participants experienced difficulties understanding vaccination-related information in electronic invitations and vaccination centers, and usually, it was family members who helped with translations.

“My daughter helped me find it [information about vaccination] ... She did everything for me, I did not even ask, and she did not even explain. We just took the vaccine the same date …”

4 Conclusion

This study showed that COVID-19 among people from Arabic-speaking minorities were intensively discussed, but opinions varied, often leaving people confused. Some participants experienced difficulties understanding vaccination-related information when booking or receiving a vaccination and usually got help from their bilingual family member. To help ethnic minority people make informed decisions, systematic efforts to translate and disseminate official COVID-19 vaccine information are needed.

5 References


6 Contact
Ramune Jacobsen, Ramune.Jacobsen@pharm.ku.dk