The Importance of Countering Vaccine Misinformation In 200 Words

Population Health Sciences

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A recently published study by researchers in New Zealand shows that information provided to pregnant mothers can influence their decision about vaccinating their children. Pregnant mothers who received discouraging information about vaccines were less likely to have their infant vaccinated on time compared to those who received no information about vaccines. Interestingly, though, encouraging information about vaccines seemed to have no impact on whether a mother vaccinated her child.

While these results feel discouraging, we must continue to focus on learning the most effective ways to address fears about vaccines and keep children and communities safe. We know certain communication strategies can work to increase vaccination rates – many of which are outlined in our recent *Evidence to Action* brief — and include:

- Improving health care providers' ability to make strong vaccine recommendations
- Encouraging providers to discuss personal choices to vaccinate our own children and family members
- Improving public vaccine education and awareness about vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases

Fear is a powerful motivator, but we must continue to leverage effective communication strategies that counter vaccine misinformation. When vaccine hesitancy leads to immunization delay or refusal, it poses a public health and economic threat. Policymakers, health care providers and other stakeholders all need to work together to disseminate compelling positive messages to motivate vaccine acceptance.

For more information, read Dr. Feemster's full perspective piece on this research here.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Communications Manager Lauren Walens.

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