

Abstract for poster presentation at Canadian Public Health Association Conference, October 2020

**Title:**

**Exploring COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Among the Canadian Population**

Ribeiro, P.A.B., Stojanovic J., Boucher, V. G., Bruno, R., Bacon S. L., & Lavoie K.L.

**Introduction/background:**

COVID-19 was classified as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. In Canada, as of August 28, 2020, there have been 126,848 cases and 9,102 deaths related to COVID-19. Currently, there are nine good vaccine candidates being tested in phase 2 and 3 trials. However, the success of vaccination to slow the pandemic is contingent upon people being willing and then actually getting the vaccine. Our study explored COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy in the Canadian population.

**Methods/evaluation:**

We analyzed data from the Canadian respondents of the CCOVID-19-related Attitudes, concerns Responses and impacts in relation to public health policies (iCARE) global study. Data were collected between March 27 and July 26, 2020. Statistical analyses were conducted to explore differences based on socio-demographic and concomitant health-related behaviours.

**Results or proposed outcomes:**

Overall, 12,747 Canadians participated in surveys 1 to 3, and 10,586 individuals answered the question regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. A substantial proportion of individuals reported an unwillingness to get the COVID-19 vaccine (24%). Women, young individuals (24 or fewer years of age), and those with low education levels reported higher hesitancy rates to get the vaccine (25.1%, 30.3%, 27.2%, respectively). Only 7% of people who reported regular uptake of the flu vaccine were unwilling to get the COVID-19 vaccine, compared to 39% of those that never get vaccinated for flu. Additional differences were found for perceived income and health-related behaviours. However, the trends did not seem to change over time.

**Recommendations and implications for policy, practice or additional research:**

Our findings indicate concerning levels of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in the Canadian population, with some sections of the population being more hesitant than others. Reducing vaccine hesitancy represents one of the many challenges in the fight against COVID-19 that urgently needs addressing by the policymakers and public health authorities.