



Letter to the Editor

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Risk Communication Principles for COVID-19 Vaccination: Application in China

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Despite the decline in global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infections, the potential for mutations remains, emphasizing the importance of vaccination. Through its national strategies, such as risk communication, China has achieved a commendable vaccination rate of 90.43%.¹ Risk communication is the interactive process of exchanging information and opinions among stakeholders, including individuals, organizations, and institutions. Risk communication involves essential components building trust, announcing early, maintaining transparency, listening, and planning. This study aims to analyze how China has applied these principles in the COVID-19 vaccination approach, offering insights into a broader global context.

Building Trust

Trust plays a pivotal role in promoting high vaccination uptake. In China, the populace's faith in vaccines, health infrastructure, and governmental decisions has significantly boosted vaccination rates. With a vaccination rate surpassing 90%, China stands as a testament to the value of mutual trust between the government, health institutions, and its citizens. However, challenges, such as the Changsheng vaccine crisis,² underline the need for governments to continuously uphold vaccine safety and enhance governmental credibility. The Chinese Vaccine Administration Law, ensuring comprehensive oversight throughout a vaccine's lifecycle, is another step in fortifying public trust.

Announce Early

In the age of digital information, public reactions to health crises are magnified. Recognizing this, the National Health Commission of China places great emphasis on communication, often holding press conferences or proactively releasing the work plan for COVID-19 vaccination. By using a range of media platforms, Chinese health institutions strategically address public concerns and keep citizens informed about vaccine safety, efficacy, and benefits. Mainstream media sources play a crucial role in shaping public sentiment toward vaccines.

Maintain Transparency

Transparent communication serves as a cornerstone for public acceptance of vaccines. China has consistently shared data on vaccine safety and efficacy, thereby strengthening public trust. From March 24, 2021, to December 24, 2022, the National Health Commission of China proactively provided daily updates on vaccination numbers. The transparency offered by this vast amount of real-world data provides a more robust assurance of public safety. After the administration of 3.38 billion doses, the overall incidence of adverse events was 70.45 per 1 million.³

Listening

Tailoring mass communication to address public concerns impacts vaccination uptake. The National Health Commission and the Chinese CDC have published various "Q&A on COVID-19 Vaccine Inoculation" editions, addressing the primary vaccination concerns of the public.⁴ These guides range from general vaccine information to responses to recent outbreaks such as detailing available vaccines and emphasizing the importance of vaccinating prioritized groups.

Planning

For comprehensive vaccination outreach, strategic planning centered on risk communication becomes indispensable. Anticipating potential challenges, the National Health Commission formulated guidelines that address various vaccination scenarios, from delayed vaccination to

potential vaccine mixing.⁵ Moreover, a dedicated monitoring system has been established to track adverse post-vaccination reactions and ensure timely interventions.

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