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COVID-19: Perspectives from Youth in Detention

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COVID-19: Perspectives from Youth in Detention

Submitting/Presenting Author (must be a trainee): April D. McNeill-Johnson, MD

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Other authors/contributors involved in project: Megha Ramaswamy, PhD, MPH; Zuri Hudson, DO; Brittany Moore, MD; Dumebi Okocha

IRB Number: STUDY00001433

Describe role of Submitting/Presenting Trainee in this project (limit 150 words):

I am this study's principal investigator, with mentorship by Dr. Kimberly Randell. I was the lead author for the study protocol and this abstract. I had a significant role in study design and execution, including data analysis and interpretation. I will be the lead author of a manuscript that will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. I take accountability for all aspects of the work, including accuracy and validity of the contents.

Background, Objectives/Goal, Methods/Design, Results, Conclusions limited to 500 words

Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified health disparities among youth in detention. Understanding perspectives of these youth on the pandemic and COVID-19 vaccination may identify strategies to mitigate pandemic-related health disparities in this group.

Objectives/Goal:

To explore perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic, effect on detention experience and the COVID vaccine among youth in detention.

Methods/Design:

This is a secondary analysis of a study examining healthcare needs and experiences of youth in detention. We recruited a convenience sample of youth (14-17 years) detained in urban midwestern juvenile detention centers from January-November 2021. We conducted semi-structured individual interviews & used a thematic analysis approach to code interview transcripts, after which codes were consolidated into themes. In early interviews, participants spontaneously discussed the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting addition of interview questions to further explore

this. Participants completed an anonymous demographic questionnaire at the conclusion of the interview.

Results:

15 youth (Table 1) discussed COVID-19 to date, with interviews ongoing. Youth had varied opinions on the gravity of the pandemic. Most thought that COVID-19 was a significant issue, but some felt the pandemic was fictitious. Youth obtained information primarily from family, friends, social media, and commercial news sources.

Most youth voiced that they would not get the COVID-19 vaccine. Many expressed general distrust of the vaccine. Concerns included the speed of vaccine development and implementation and misconceptions about how the vaccine works. Some also felt they are immune to COVID-19 due to their youth and health. Among those who were vaccinated, parental preference and personal gain (i.e., travel, sport participation) drove vaccination acceptance. Youth suggested targeted educational strategies to increase youth vaccine uptake.

Youth described negative impacts of the pandemic on their detention experiences. Visitation was limited with bans on personal touch, halts placed on packages being delivered from the outside community, and a 10-day quarantine was mandated at detention entry.

See Table 2 for illustrative quotes.

Conclusions:

Youth in detention have varied perspectives on the gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccine misconceptions and perceived lack of vulnerability to COVID-19 contributed to vaccine hesitancy. Vaccine uptake by youth in detention may be improved by partnering with parents, highlighting personal gain, and youth-targeted education.