



CHAMPION CHAT

Lauren Fore, MD, is a Family Practitioner in Central Illinois. She sat down with the ICAAP team to discuss how her team has achieved high vaccination rates in her area.

What have you done to achieve high COVID-19 vaccination rates at your clinic / organization? Has this shifted the way you manage vaccination in your clinic ?

Our success with vaccination comes from having a strong focus on preventive care. We see people of all ages, infants to teenagers to adults. However, we stress the importance of COVID-19 vaccine discussions in every workflow. We do not shy away from having conversations about vaccines and ensure to make it approachable and transparent.

This strategy has helped in the past and continues to aid in vaccinating at high rates. When COVID-19 vaccines first rolled out, we did not shift a lot of the way we administer vaccines. Since preventive care is a priority in our clinic, vaccination with patients and caregivers have always been a core practice.

What operational strategies led to your clinic's high vaccination rates? How does your clinic keep pace with evolving COVID guidelines?

Our clinic's success in achieving high vaccination rates is largely due to making vaccines available on-site. We prioritize open discussions about vaccines, finding fulfillment in administering them to patients who choose to receive them in office.

Our clinical staff is well-trained on available vaccines including how to administer them and the timing of it. A dedicated vaccine coordinator managed ordering. Regular meetings with staff help determine vaccination schedules, especially with evolving guidelines. We rely on sources like ICAAP, CDC, IVAC for COVID updates, which are incorporated into our monthly provider meetings.

As a team, we work diligently to make vaccine scheduling easy for patients and their parents / caregivers by extending clinic hours, offering vaccine only appointments, and walk-in options. Past success with mass vaccination clinics has also helped to increase uptake.

"It is very satisfying to have vaccine conversations with patients and then administer the vaccine right away."





What has been the biggest challenge with uptake of COVID-19 vaccines in your clinic? And how do you combat that?

Vaccine misinformation and a general lack of trust in healthcare in the past few years has been a big hurdle when speaking to patients. Conversations about COVID and vaccines bring out a lot of strong feelings, leading to difficult conversations. Our clinic is committed to navigating these challenging talks with patients, as addressing their concerns and misinformation is crucial to alleviate fears and hesitancy around vaccination. We ensure our staff know that vaccine conversations and education should be open and comfortable conversations. We try our best to reassure them about the importance and safety of vaccinating. These meaningful discussions have proven successful in encouraging vaccine acceptance. Although it is worth noting that addressing vaccine hesitancy has been somewhat easier with boosters compared to the initial COVID-19 vaccine.

"At the very least the patient is hearing from one person in the medical community that COVID vaccines are important and safe"

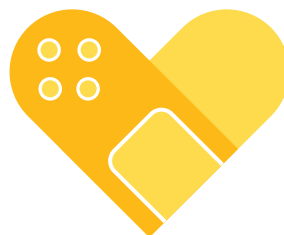
With commercialization, do you foresee any new challenges or a change in the way you approach vaccination ?

"I tell my patients the new vaccine will be similar to the flu shot, and it clicks!"

As we look ahead to commercialization, we are hopeful that we will not have to adjust our workflows too much. We are preparing patients about the new vaccine by comparing it to the seasonal flu vaccine / shot. Patients seem to be more on board with the vaccine, when explained in those terms. However, some of our biggest concerns include wasting vaccines and ensuring our underinsured / uninsured vaccines are available for them. We still have vaccines in our clinic and are preparing for the fall vaccines with both updated flu shots and updated COVID-19 vaccines.

What are some thing you want your peers who are not vaccinating in their spaces to know?

Vaccinating proves highly successful when administered in office during patient visits. It is much more satisfying to directly administer vaccines than to educate patients and direct them to external vaccine clinics or pharmacies. Patient compliance tends to waver when they are asked to go receive a vaccine elsewhere. We stress that everyone ask about vaccinations to patients and add it to routine workflows, as well as, have it available in clinics to ensure uptake.



Thank you Dr. Fore for being a COVID-19 vaccine champion!