

ABC International Development

Health Worker Perceptions and Attitudes to Vaccines in PNG

PNG Update 2023

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ABC International Development

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is the largest independent, public sector media organisation in the Pacific region. It takes Australia's voice to the world and provides a voice for the people of our region. ABC International Development (ABCID), the media development arm of the ABC, works with Pacific media practitioners and partners in building regional media capacity to be professional, inclusive and resilient.

For more information on ABCID's programs, current and past research please visit: <https://www.abc.net.au/abc-international-development>

Oxfam ABCID PNG COVID-19 Project

The Project seeks to support and improve PNG's existing systems and increases the effectiveness of COVID-19 and prevention communication through coordination and a focus on information gaps and needs. It responds to the current context of ongoing COVID-19 cases, misinformation in the community, and a need to support vaccination strategies at the national and provincial levels.

Introduction

AHP Oxfam Program

AHP Oxfam COVID-19 Contextual Research

“Increase resilience of communities to misinformation and empower them with knowledge and skills to promote COVID-19 awareness and vaccination”

- Address low vaccination rates in PNG.
- Build on previous research, that identified contrasting perceptions from health workers on COVID-19 and vaccine related information.
- Understand of cultural pressures and the threats of violence when advocating for COVID-19 vaccinations in communities.

Research Methodology

- From February 2022 to March 2023, ABCID invited 68 health care workers to participate in semi-structured interviews to gauge their perceptions of current and previous COVID-19 messaging.



ABCID Information Toolkits provided to health workers in Papua New Guinea. 2023

– Vaccinations in PNG

History of public attitudes to vaccination in PNG

"The real collapse in vaccination rates was between 2013 and 2017. And it was during this period when the government revenue falls and health spending was cut by 9%....health services were no longer the priority" - Kingtau Mambon, PNG University. (September 2021).

"It really affected the people at the forefront of our health operations generally....and we really were hamstrung from the start because when clinics are shutting, when people don't have job security, it just makes the job so much harder," - Api Kassman, Executive Director National Vaccine Taskforce (September 2021).

<https://www.abc.net.au/pacific/programs/pacificbeat/png-vax-rates/13540742>

Role of Health Workers

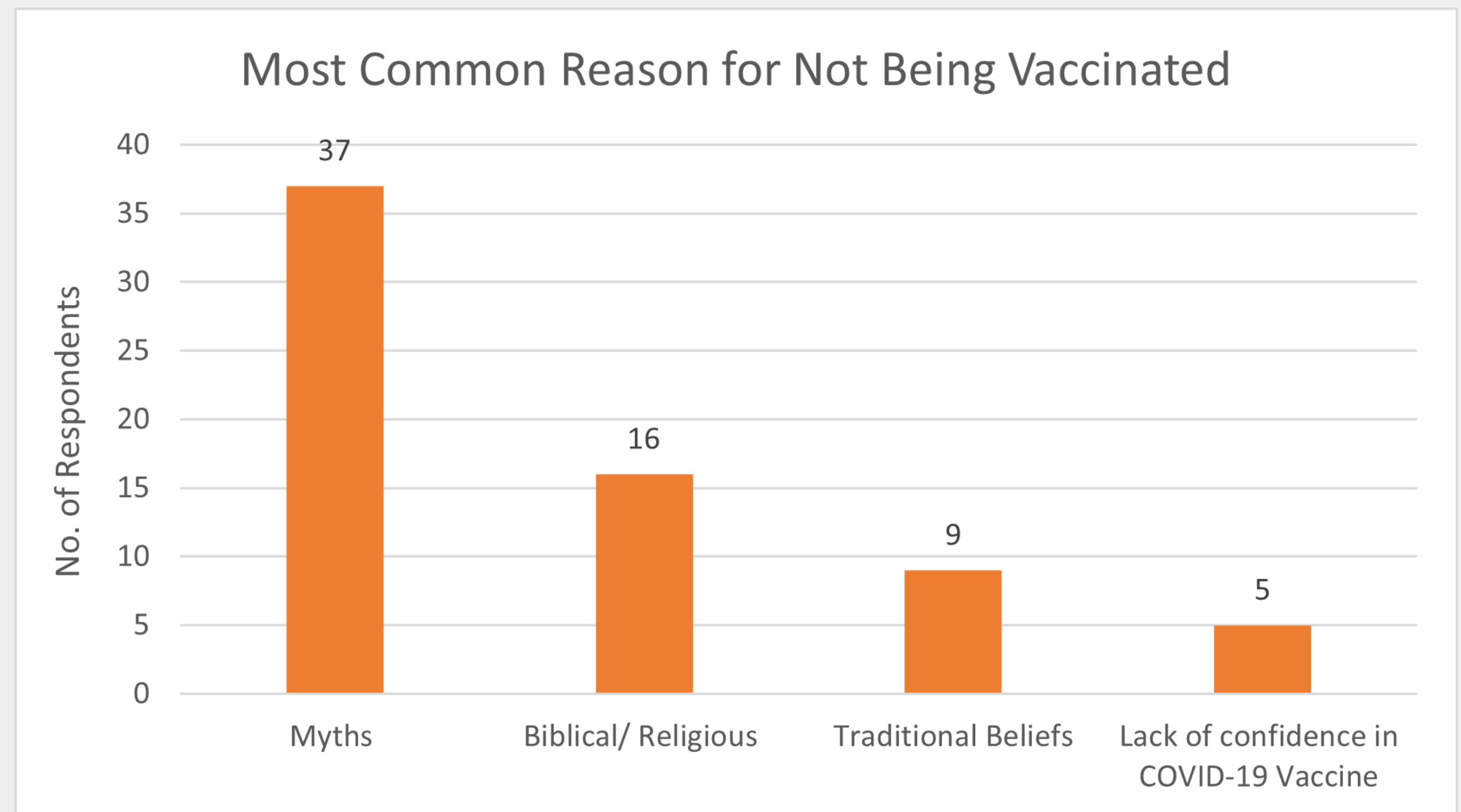
**As agents of
communication and
advocacy**

- Health care workers are key proponents of vaccine communication and advocacy.
- Emergency care workers performed multiple roles during the pandemic.
- Health workers are attuned to methods of communication that are most effective in educating the general public about vaccines and health measures.

Theme 1

Prevalence of myths and misinformation

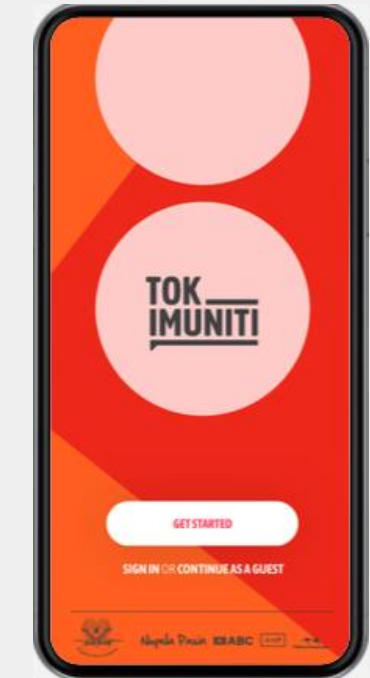
- Myths about vaccine side effects, disinformation, and fear of the unknown was noted by health workers as the dominant reason for vaccine hesitancy in the community.



Theme 2

Beyond informational access

- The TOK IMUNITI App is based on findings that informational access alone, does not lead to greater levels of engagement with health messaging.



- Research has shown that health workers in Papua New Guinea were not automatic supporters of vaccination.

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Theme 3

Grassroots
engagement as the
precursor to
behaviour change

What can be done to change attitudes towards vaccinations?

- Speaking to provincial communities to measure receptivity of materials is crucial to determine how health messaging should be distributed.
- This provides an opportunity to overlay audience findings against broader institutional strategies. Pivoting away from sole focus on cold-chain distribution and towards concerns of community.

— Future Opportunities

In communication for
development (C4D)

- Highlight the value of communication tools as an opportunity to empower health care workers and provide a resource to fight misinformation.
- Communication tools to increase cultural sensitivity to development practice.
- Expand past just vaccines- increasing the scope of health app/toolkit with information about other communicable diseases and other development issues.