

# Behavioral strategies to promote a national COVID-19 vaccine program

December 14 2020

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This scanning electron microscope image shows SARS-CoV-2 (yellow)—also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes COVID-19—isolated from a patient, emerging from the surface of cells (blue/pink) cultured in the lab. Credit: NIAID-RML

National efforts to develop a coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

vaccine at "warp speed" will likely yield a safe and effective vaccine by early 2021. However, this important milestone is only the first step in an equally important challenge: getting a majority of the U.S. public vaccinated.

Authors of a viewpoint article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* share five strategies and implementation considerations, informed by insights from [behavioral science](#), for a national COVID-19 [vaccine](#) promotion program. Alison M. Bутtenheim, Ph.D., MBA, the Patricia Bleznak Silverstein and the Howard A. Silverstein Term Endowed Professorship in Global Women's Health at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing (Penn Nursing), is senior author of the article.

"The U.S. needs a national [strategy](#) for the promotion of COVID-19 vaccines that unites the urgency and commitment of Operation Warp Speed with innovative behavioral science and social marketing approaches to increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence and acceptance in diverse populations," she says.

The recommended strategies are:

- Make the vaccine free and easily accessible.
- Make access to valued settings conditional on getting vaccinated.
- Use public endorsements from trusted leaders to increase uptake.
- Provide priority access to people who sign up to get vaccinated before vaccines are widely available.
- Transform individual vaccination decisions into a public act.

The researchers also recommend the formation of a national entity similar to Operation Warp Speed to steer federal COVID-19 vaccine [promotion](#) efforts. "This entity should include scientists from multiple disciplines (epidemiology, vaccine science, behavioral science, social

marketing, communications) as well as vaccine program delivery experts," says Bутtenheim. "The team should represent a spectrum of political views to depoliticize pandemic response."

The article "Behaviorally Informed Strategies for a National COVID-19 Vaccine Promotion Program" is available [online](#).

**More information:** Kevin G. Volpp et al. Behaviorally Informed Strategies for a National COVID-19 Vaccine Promotion Program, *JAMA* (2020). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2020.24036](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.24036)

Provided by University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

Citation: Behavioral strategies to promote a national COVID-19 vaccine program (2020, December 14) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-12-behavioral-strategies-national-covid-vaccine.html>

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