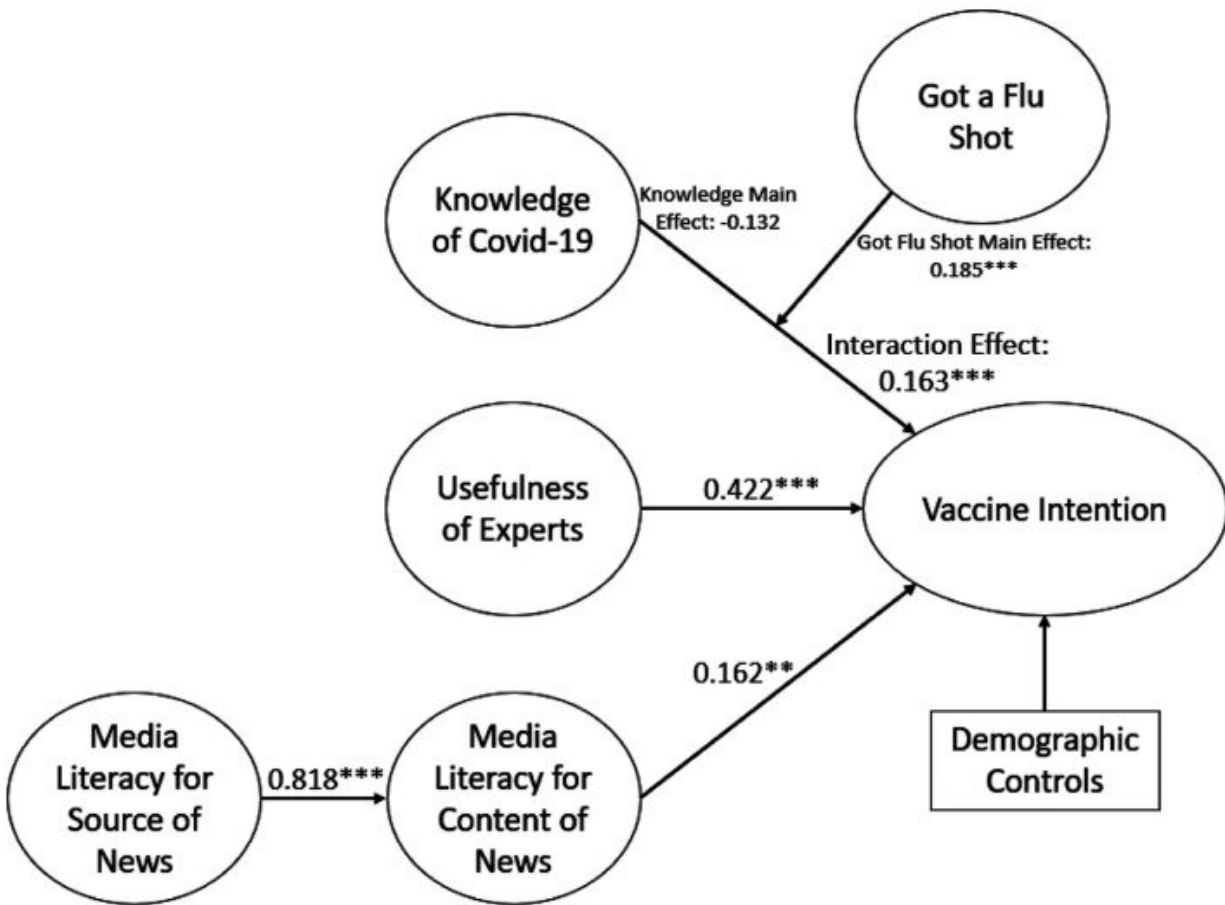


Trust in experts, media literacy connected to COVID-19 vaccine intention

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The structural model with standardized coefficients. ** P American Journal of Health Promotion (2022). DOI: 10.1177/08901171221132750

An early pandemic survey found that respondents' intentions to receive

COVID-19 vaccines were linked more to their media literacy and opinion of health experts than knowledge of the virus or previous vaccination behavior.

In the study, published in the *American Journal of Health Promotion*, Washington State University researchers also found that for respondents who had recently refused a [flu vaccine](#), higher COVID-19 knowledge actually correlated with lower future vaccine intentions.

"We have known for some time that knowledge and previous behavior can provide helpful clues to what people will do, but that is often insufficient to reliably predict behavior," said Erica Austin, director of the WSU Murrow Center for Media and Health Promotion. "What we found was that measurements of trust in experts, the ability to identify reliable media sources and the ability to critically evaluate those media sources were more powerful predictors than either previous vaccine behavior or previous knowledge."

For this study, the researchers conducted an [online survey](#) of 1,264 U.S. adults. The results indicate that people were engaging in what's called motivated reasoning: the psychological process by which people consciously and selectively use facts to lead to a conclusion that reinforces their desired beliefs rather than rationally analyzing the evidence.

According to the authors, such processes are heavily influenced by the constantly changing news environment. It is a maze of information, misinformation, which is unintentionally incorrect, and disinformation, which is intentionally false.

"There are people out there who are motivated to take that little bit of misinformation and build a whole bunch of misinformation or even disinformation to try to sell you an idea or product based around it,"

Austin said. "Most often they're selling you both, but they're probably not out there to do something good for you; they're usually out there to do something that's good for themselves."

The results have important implications for [health promotion](#) practice and research, Austin added. It highlights the significance of individuals' attempts to independently verify information and the need to cultivate their trust in health experts. The researchers also recommend that public health campaigns make sure to respect individuals' freedom to make decisions for themselves while helping them make those decisions based on [accurate information](#) from credible sources.

More information: Erica W. Austin et al, How Media Literacy, Trust of Experts and Flu Vaccine Behaviors Associated with COVID-19 Vaccine Intentions, *American Journal of Health Promotion* (2022). [DOI: 10.1177/08901171221132750](https://doi.org/10.1177/08901171221132750)

Provided by Washington State University

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