

Vaccination mistrust still widespread: Study

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Four years after COVID-19 began to spread worldwide, a University of Texas at Arlington social worker says work still needs to be done to address the importance of getting vaccinated.

Research led by Hui Huang, associate professor in the School of Social

Work, shows some apprehension remains among pregnant women in getting vaccinated against the virus. The findings are [published](#) in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Huang and her colleagues took an innovative approach to gathering feedback from [pregnant women](#) by partnering with the app Count the Kicks to analyze pregnancy survey results from women who had recently given birth. For the study, the team took a close look at responses regarding beliefs and behaviors related to COVID-19 vaccinations and found about two-thirds of respondents had been vaccinated.

"Previous studies focused on asking for patients' willingness to get the [vaccine](#) but did not explore if they actually received it," Huang said. "This was one innovative aspect of our work."

In addition, the findings revealed no relationship between vaccination and birth outcome, reinforcing the scientific community's belief that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for expecting moms.

When those who were not vaccinated were asked why, their primary concerns were the safety of their unborn child, lack of trust in the vaccine, and concern over side effects. Results also revealed that vaccination rates are lower among African American mothers. Huang suspects, based on [empirical evidence](#) from other studies, that this is due to a feeling of distrust that some in the African American community have toward the [medical system](#).

"They have historical trauma with the medical system due to unethical research and [medical practice](#) done to the community," she said.

"Another concern is social media misinformation. Those concerns could be among the reasons why [minority groups](#) are more hesitant to get vaccinated."

Huang says a team effort is still needed not just to stress the importance of the vaccine and the fact that it is safe but also to increase its accessibility in all communities.

"We need to get the information out there," she said. "We can do this, for example, through public awareness campaigns engaging trusted spokespersons, especially those from minority populations who can demonstrate the vaccine is safe to take."

More information: Hui Huang et al, Being Pregnant during COVID-19: Exploring the COVID-19 Related Beliefs, Behaviors, and Birth Outcome among Users of a Pregnancy App, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph21010034](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21010034)

Provided by University of Texas at Arlington

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