Lottery-based incentives do not increase COVID-19 vaccination rates: study

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Would you be more willing to get vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus if you could participate in a lottery for cash and prizes? The answer was surprisingly no, according to Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) researchers who found that Ohio's "Vax-a-Million" lottery-based incentive system, intended to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates, was not associated with an increase in COVID-19 vaccinations.

Prior reports in the media had suggested that the Ohio lottery increased COVID-19 vaccinations, leading other states to use COVID-19 vaccine incentive lotteries in an attempt to increase slowing vaccination rates. "However, prior evaluations of the Ohio vaccine incentive lottery did not account for other changes in COVID-19 vaccination rates in the United States, such as those that may have been due to expansion of vaccination to ages 12-15," explained corresponding author Allan J. Walkey, MD, MSc, professor of medicine at BUSM.

The researchers believe identifying interventions that can successfully increase COVID-19 vaccination rates is a critical public health issue necessary to curb the pandemic. "It is important to rigorously evaluate strategies designed to increase vaccine uptake, rapidly deploy successful strategies, and phase out those that do not work," Walkey said.

Although Walkey and his colleagues were sorry to see that state lottery incentives were not associated with an increase COVID-19 vaccinations, they hope their findings will lead to a shift in focus away from ineffective and expensive lotteries, and on to further study of other programs that may more successfully increase vaccine uptake.


Provided by Boston University School of Medicine