Understanding COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy among the Black Community in East Oakland: A Qualitative Study at Roots Community Health Center
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Background
- Black communities have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic compared to non-Black communities in the US

Community Partner
- Roots Community Health Center (https://rootsclinic.org/) is a non-profit, whose mission is to uplift those impacted by systemic inequities and poverty, through medical and behavioral health care, health navigation, workforce enterprises, housing, outreach, and advocacy.

Objective
- To increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among the Black community in East Oakland, Roots Clinic conducted a qualitative study to understand the underlying motivators and barriers around the COVID-19 vaccines in the Black community

Project Description & Methodology
- Three in-depth semi-structured interviews and two focus groups were conducted to better understand participant’s experience with COVID-19 in East Oakland between October and November. Study participants were randomly selected by Roots Clinic’s staff.
- The interviews and focus groups were conducted in English on zoom. They were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results

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<th>Major themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
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| Poorly Disseminated Information about COVID 19 (from all sources) | • News outlets and social media  
• COVID-19 myths 
• Researching COVID info via health-related websites 
• Accessibility to resources |
| Mistrust of the medical system and the COVID-19 vaccine | • Conflicting information about the COVID-19 vaccine  
• Bodily autonomy/ pressure to –or not- take the vaccine 
• Systemic abandonment 
• Vaccine Hesitancy 
• Lack of trust in the medical system |
| Coping strategies | • Relying on social circles  
• Use of faith/ prayer or meditation 
• Disengagement from social media and televised news 
• Social isolation |
| Access (or lack of) to culturally considerate care | • Found a location to receive vaccine  
• Numerous unanswered COVID related questions  
• Trusts only Roots staff to provide COVID related information  
• Traveled outside of health plan for COVID related care |
| Motivators to take the vaccine | • External pressure from employers  
• To support family members deemed “high risk”  
• Desire to travel 
• Loss of a family member or friend to COVID-19 |

Lessons Learned
- Many factors influence vaccine hesitancy among the Black community, including mistrust of the system and the COVID-19 vaccine
- Roots should provide more community-centered COVID-19 educational resources to its clients to address knowledge gaps
- Roots should center trusted community members and partners in its outreach efforts.

Future Directions
- Continue to access the evolving needs of the community
- Pop-up clinics
- Contact unvaccinated community members and provide additional resources
- Offer vaccine incentive as encouragement to become vaccinated
- Barber shop project

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