Promoting Vaccine Confidence

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We are in challenging times. Frequently I'm asked how I'm holding it together. My response is we'll continue to be present for our patient families and colleagues one day at a time. Yet I am tired. Tired of the broken healthcare system. Tired of defending evidence-based clinical practice. Tired of conversations about vaccine hesitancy. These moments are when I have to remind myself that progress is not a straight line but a connection of small dots.

All our progress in medicine and pediatrics didn't happen overnight or in smooth progress either. All of us - clinicians within our communities and our professional organizations (the AAP and our local chapter AAPCA1) are doing a lot. AAP steadfastly advocates for children's health and pediatricians' sustainability. In a timely manner given my vaccine conversation fatigue phase, AAP sponsored an Immunization ECHO series this past Spring. It was so helpful to chat with colleagues around the country experiencing the same conversation fatigue from vaccine hesitancy.

So often as challenges like vaccine hesitancy pop up, I go back to this question: what is within my control? I choose the messaging our staff uses. Each year, I facilitate refresher training on importance and benefits of immunizations for children and their families. I'd typically tell patient-families, "Your child is getting their winter vaccines today including Flu and covid." Learning from the ECHO series, I'll now add, "I'm getting my own Flu and covid vaccines too, and so is my family so we're better protected for this winter season."

Most vaccine hesitancy is ambivalence, not resistance. And unfortunately, we're too aware of adverse outcomes from vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks. I learnt how to pace myself while not lecturing vaccine-hesitant parents and caregivers. Instead, I learnt a 3 -step approach:

- Start by listening to their concerns on the first visit
- Provide information for the 2nd visit
- Plan for discussion and decision-making at the 3rd visit.

I'll lean into the trusting relationship we've built over the years, and confident patient families will keep coming back. My focus remains on providing the highest quality encounter - respectfully providing them with the information and support they need to make their decision. The outcome cannot define my effort.

As our clinic pre-ordered VFC winter vaccines, I'll be utilizing new VFC vaccine approvals to support immunization rates. For example, the seasonal influenza vaccine nasal spray now available via VFC for clinic staff administration. Meanwhile we'll now be outreaching now in preparation for September. One vaccine appointment at a time. One small dot in the line. I still got this!

Resources:

Communicating with families and promoting vaccine confidence - AAP

Vaccine Confident posters - AAP

Respiratory Viruses Hub - California Public Health Dept July 2026



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