

Words Matter for Vaccine Acceptance

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In communication materials and discussion with individuals

Word	Problem/Comment	Potential Alternative
Vaccine hesitancy (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variable meanings • Polarizing • Sometimes compressed as “confidence” when far broader in scope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccine acceptance • Factors affecting vaccine acceptance
Vaccine demand (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear meaning: for some means at community level; for others also at individual level <p>Also note, that acceptance does not equate with demand as <i>“an individual or community may fully accept vaccination without hesitancy but may not demand vaccination or a specific vaccine (1)”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and individual support for vaccine and the vaccine program
Marginalized, vulnerable, people living with health and social inequities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An important concept with respect to vaccine equity. Some see these terms as disrespectful and even hurtful, i.e. as if this is their choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underserved • Equity-seeking • Equity-requiring • Equity-plus (requiring attention to needed supports to achieve equity)

Vaccine refuser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the continuum from full acceptance to non-acceptance. Refuser implies active and possibly loud refusal. Some see this term as pejorative and hurtful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Person who) declines vaccination
Anti-vaxxer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be vocal in concerns raised and active in spreading vaccine disinformation. Some see this term as derogatory. Adds a “them versus us divide” ethos that may be off-putting to those who are still in contemplation stage of vaccine acceptance. Not constructive in a patient-health care worker relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person opposed to vaccinations
Herd Immunity (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical jargon. For some this is off putting as term used in livestock farming etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community immunity Community protection
Seniors, old, the elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many do not want to be labelled as “old” as may imply “no longer useful”. “Elderly” is an adjective not a noun (as in “the elderly”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older adults Elders (older wise persons who carry the teachings) Persons above a specified age (e.g., over 65 years)
In the context of data collection: Gender identity (male, female), Racial identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why the information is being collected may not be clear. Some programs may request people to identify (self-label) with racial or gender identity categories that individuals find pejorative or inappropriate. For example, asking someone to indicate whether they are male or female doesn’t fit for someone who identifies as non-binary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be clear about why the information is being gathered and provide an option not to respond. Support flexible options when collecting these data (e.g., male, female, non-binary, two-spirit, other, prefer not to answer, etc.)

Communication during vaccination

Word	Problem/Comment	Potential Alternative
<p>“Here comes the sting.”</p> <p>“Here comes the jab.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words perceived as threatening may elicit fear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use neutral words when signaling the procedure and during interactions “Here I go.” “One, two, three.”
<p>“Don’t worry... “</p> <p>“It’s ok... You’ll be fine.”</p> <p>“It’s almost over, it’s almost over.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetitive statements of reassurance can increase distress by bringing attention to the procedure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Would you like to talk about something else? Or would you like to take a few slow deep breaths?” If yes to distraction, consider question: “What music/book/sports do you like?”
<p>“It won’t hurt.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> False suggestions are ineffective and promote mistrust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information in a balanced manner. “Some people say they feel a pinch or some pressure. Others don’t feel much at all. We do not know how it will feel for you. You can let me know.”
<p>“Look away now.”</p> <p>“Take a deep breath now.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imposing coping strategies that are not aligned with an individual’s preferred strategies can increase distress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite individuals to exercise their preferences. “Do you like to look or to look away?” “Do you want to take a deep breath?”