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Willingness to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and associated factors in Migori County, Kenya: Analysis of cross-sectional survey data

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized widespread vaccine hesitancy. We aimed to describe attitudes towards virus containment and vaccination in rural Kenya. Identifying factors associated with vaccination attitudes, such as information sources and health worker outreach, will allow for targeted programming and prevention methods.

Methods: A cross-sectional observational survey was conducted in Migori County, Kenya, in both control areas and areas served by the Lwala Community Alliance. 7,196 households were included for analyses. The primary outcome was willingness to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Results: 5,386 of the 7,196 total heads of households (74.8%) were willing to get the COVD-19 vaccination. A high percentage of respondents (81.5%) considered self-risk of contracting the virus when making vaccination decisions. The Ministry of Health (21.3%), health workers (17.5%) and the CHW that visits home (17.2%) were used very often as COVID-19 information sources, notably more often than both social media and newspapers. Nearly half of respondents (42.3%) believed there is a possibility that COVID-19 is a global conspiracy. Whether the vaccine has been in use for a long time with no side effects (26.2%) and whether the vaccine is free (25.3%) both played a role in many respondents' decision making.

Conclusions: We describe factors that contribute to the perception of COVID-19 and willingness to get a new vaccination in a Kenyan community in the time-period of May 3, 2021, to June 25, 2021. Measuring vaccine willingness against covariables selected based on previous literature and programmatic experience provides hyper-local information to improve regional programming and preparedness for future pandemics. Generalizable conclusions can inform other organizations working in similar environments.