


**MEETING ABSTRACTS****Sharing of Best Practices from an Emergency Medical Team Deployment in Papua New Guinea: Piloting a Health Promotion Program Targeting COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake**

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**Background/Introduction:** COVID-19 tremendously affected Papua New Guinea in late 2021, which accompanied by a low vaccination rate (<4%), lead to an International EMT Request for Assistance.

**Objectives:** Study's aim is to share how UK-Med, a part of the UK EMT, developed best practices related to risk communication and community engagement integration within a COVID-19 emergency response.

**Method/Description:** A participatory health promotion program was piloted in Western Highland Province among 71 health care workers. Training of trainers approach was adopted to build the capacity of health workers in advocating for vaccines uptake. Perception survey was used at the baseline and at the

end of the program to assess the knowledge, skills, and attitude of the participants towards COVID-19 vaccine acceptance. A descriptive analysis and paired t-test were used.

**Results/Outcomes:** Health care professionals are not well-equipped with accurate, scientific, and up-to-date information related to COVID-19 vaccines; which leads to increase in concern and fear among them. Health care workers affect community members' decision to take the COVID-19 vaccine, being viewed as referents within their communities. The paired t-test showed a significant increase in the knowledge, skills, and attitude (P value <.001) of the participants toward COVID-19 vaccines. Participants described being ready to engage community influencers and cascade training to further reach out to community groups.

**Conclusion:** Integrating RCCE within EMT deployments plays a crucial role in leveraging health care capabilities to influence community members and advocate for COVID-19 vaccines uptake; which will ultimately decrease morbidity and mortality. Further research is required to strengthen the role of health promotion in emergencies.

*Prehosp Disaster Med.* 2022;37(Suppl. 2):s58.

doi:[10.1017/S1049023X22001571](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X22001571)