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As COVID-19 vaccination rates plateau, health care, public health and business leaders call for formation of Vaccine Confidence Leagues to build vaccine confidence and increase uptake at the community level

The Get the Medications Right™ Institute's National Task Force releases final recommendations to strengthen the nations' vaccination systems

Tysons Corner, VA – June 15, 2021 – Ending the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic requires widespread vaccination, but as the immunization rate slows across the United States, it is unclear whether President Biden's goal of having all U.S. adults get at least one shot of the vaccine by July 4 can be achieved. Surveys suggest that fully a third of U.S. adults do not want to be vaccinated. Building confidence in the vaccines to boost uptake is urgent, says a [new report](#) from the bipartisan [GTMRx National Task Force](#) focused on building vaccine confidence in the health neighborhood. The task force calls on communities across the nation to create grassroots organizations called Vaccine Confidence Leagues, which can mobilize trusted messengers from those communities to address individuals' concerns and boost vaccine confidence and uptake.

The GTMRx Task Force, made up of leaders in health care, public health and academia, offers a framework and enumerates action steps that communities can undertake to build "civic muscle" to pursue vaccination goals. The task force report calls for convening people across the local "health neighborhood"—including health systems, medical societies, non-profit, faith-based and academic organizations, as well as businesses—to take stock of who in the community lacks vaccine confidence and craft plans to address those individuals' and groups' concern. Vaccine Confidence Leagues made up of diverse and trusted local individuals, organizations and leadership can then clear up misapprehensions and craft the messages that will be most persuasive to those who remain vaccine hesitant.

A [companion report](#) that the task force issued in March pointed out that many factors affect vaccine confidence, including fears of harmful side effects, concerns about how quickly vaccines were developed, religious objections and a variety of conspiracy theories.

"Local leaders can address today's vaccine concerns and help instill long-term confidence in the scientific discoveries that can help protect us in the future," said Paul W. Abramowitz, Pharm.D., Sc.D. (Hon), FASHP, CEO of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists and a co-chair of the task force. "These efforts are needed immediately to achieve COVID-19 vaccination goals, and in the future can also be leveraged for broader vaccination and community health efforts."

Abramowitz co-chairs the task force along with Georges C. Benjamin, MD, executive director of the American Public Health Association, and Susan Dentzer, senior policy fellow at the Robert J. Margolis Center for Health Policy at Duke University. The task force's work was sponsored by the Johnson & Johnson Corp., no employees or affiliates of which served on the task force, engaged in its deliberations or advanced or approved any of its recommendations.

“Lack of COVID-19 vaccine confidence is a serious barrier to public health efforts to protect the population. Without widespread vaccination, we are at increased risk that new, more deadly variants of the virus will develop over time,” said Benjamin. “To spare lives, it’s crucial that more people here and around the world become vaccinated. If there is one thing we have learned from this pandemic, it is the need for a stronger, better resourced public health system to adequately protect the public’s health.”

“A major strength of our report is that it calls for ‘bottom up’ efforts by communities, who are in the best position to understand who locally remains doubtful about the COVID-19 vaccines and why,” Dentzer said. “These communities can build on local efforts already under way to enhance vaccine confidence today and maintain and expand those efforts into the future—including this fall, when it is likely that vaccines will be authorized for use in children below age 12, and parents may also need to be reassured about the vaccines’ safety and efficacy.”

The task force also issued long-term recommendations to strengthen the nations’ vaccination systems and create environments that will be supportive of greater vaccine confidence in the future. These include making all vaccines available at no out-of-pocket costs to consumers; having all vaccines fully approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as soon as practicable once all relevant criteria are met; and bolstering the nation’s immunization information systems (IIS) to enable better identification of people and populations who have not been vaccinated.

The [Get the Medications Right™ \(GTMRx\) Institute](#), which convened the task force, is a catalyst for change that brings critical stakeholders together who are bound by the urgent need to get the medications right. Katherine H. Capps, GTMRx co-founder and executive director, managed the task force’s efforts to examine the issues and arrive at actionable steps to address them.

Capps noted that the task force recommendations allow for flexibility for communities to tailor their approaches to local conditions and concerns. They also pave the way for “collective impact,” calling on organizations across the health neighborhood to rise above their own agendas to build shared solutions to the complex problem of vaccine hesitancy.

“These recommendations equip local leaders and liberate those at the community level who are willing and able to help by offering an overarching strategy they can adapt to meet community needs now,” Capps said. “They complement national efforts, building a ground up approach that blends trust with time in order to effectively move those who haven’t been vaccinated yet and who trust their doctors, pharmacists, faith leaders and other community leaders to work in their best interest.”

About the Get the Medications Right™ Institute

The GTMRx Institute is a catalyst for change that brings critical stakeholders together, bound by the urgent need to get the medications right. We are physicians, pharmacists, nurses, patients, health IT innovators, drug and diagnostics companies, consumer groups, employers, payers and health systems—aligned to save lives and save money through comprehensive medication management. By showcasing [evidence](#) and innovation, we motivate practice transformation and push payment and policy reform. Together, we ACT to champion appropriate, effective, safe and precise use of medication and gene therapies. Learn more at gtmr.org.

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