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[Addressing vaccine hesitancy among Indigenous Peoples](#)

As part of efforts to beat the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, it is important to understand vaccine hesitancy expressed by many First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, write authors in a humanities article in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

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Vaccine hesitancy among many Indigenous people stems from both past and present experiences of systemic racism, including numerous well-documented examples of Indigenous Peoples being subjected to medical experimentation and fatal discrimination within the health care system.

“[Indigenous Peoples’] concerns, fears and experiences need to be taken seriously by doctors and other health care professionals and need to be differentiated from the ‘anti-vax’ movements that have thrived on social media in recent years,” writes Dr. Ian Mosby, Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, with coauthor Dr. Jaris Swidrovich, College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

The authors note that while many Indigenous Peoples support vaccination, vaccine hesitancy exists and could be a roadblock to immunizing Canada’s population.

Health care professionals, they argue, need to be educated on the history and ongoing practices of racist health care. Public health messages also need to be tailored to speak to Indigenous people’s previous experiences and public health should collaborate with Elders and trusted community leaders to deliver these messages about vaccines.

“In the long term, an inquiry into the history of medical experimentation in Canada and reparations to the affected communities will be required,” write the authors. “Before that happens, though, there also needs to be a vaccine strategy that puts the onus on Canada for doing what is necessary to prove to Indigenous communities that the

vaccine is safe, effective and in their best interests. And this should have started months ago.”

“Medical experimentation and the roots of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among Indigenous Peoples in Canada” is published February 24, 2021.

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