



# Professional Enrichment Course

University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Office of Medical Education

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## Difficult Conversations in COVID-19 Era

<b>Enrollment Period:</b>	Spring 2022
<b>Course Dates:</b>	1/10, 1/31, 2/8, 2/15 (5-7pm)
<b>Student Max:</b>	No limit
<b>Class Year:</b>	MS1, MS2
<b>Course Director:</b>	Andrew McCormick, MD - <a href="mailto:mccormickaa@upmc.edu">mccormickaa@upmc.edu</a> Andrew Nowalk, MD - <a href="mailto:nowalk@pitt.edu">nowalk@pitt.edu</a>
<b>Student Organizers:</b>	Ankit Sharma - <a href="mailto:ans389@pitt.edu">ans389@pitt.edu</a> Isabel Bleimeister - <a href="mailto:isb30@pitt.edu">isb30@pitt.edu</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Zoom
<b>Registration:</b>	Via Amp Up – You will receive an email with enrollment info
<b>Course Description:</b>	The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a widespread medical mistrust amongst the public that medical students must learn to acknowledge, understand, and engage with. Specifically, <i>Difficult Conversations</i> will focus on how vaccine hesitancy has impacted the progression of the worldwide COVID-19 vaccination campaign and vice versa, with the aim of imparting to participating medical students an understanding of how the modern anti-vax movement developed, the progress made during the last year of worldwide COVID-19 vaccination campaigns, and the skills needed to respectfully engage with individuals representing the broad spectrum of vaccine hesitant beliefs.
<b>Pre-Requisites:</b>	None
<b>Requirements:</b>	Attend all sessions; participate in an active and engaged manner.
<b>Texts:</b>	None

## **Session 1: Where we stand -- a year into the COVID-19 vaccination campaign**

An initial didactic session led by Dr. Andy Nowalk will go over the following:

- 1) The history of modern vaccine hesitancy
- 2) The state of COVID-19 pandemic
- 3) The development of COVID-19 vaccines
- 4) The progress made worldwide a year into the COVID-19 vaccination campaign
- 5) How vaccine hesitancy has impacted the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines
- 6) The various approaches taken by governments to address vaccine hesitancy

Following Dr. Nowalk's didactic session, we will have a panel-led discussion about the public health, ethical, and legal aspects of the vaccine mandates that have defined the most recent phase of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign in the US.

**Potential Speakers:** Ben Bratman, JD, Megan Freeman, MD, PhD, Judy Martin, MD

### **Pre-Reading:**

- Kaiser Family Foundation's *Vaccine Monitor Dashboard*
- *Ileal-lymphoid-nodular hyperplasia non-specific colitis and pervasive developmental disorder* (Lancet, 1998)

## **Session 2: Understanding vaccine hesitancy**

Community partners from The Urban League and Casa San José will present on the historical and current reasons for mistrust of the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine within traditionally medically underserved communities. Following the presentation by The Urban League and Casa San José, Dr. Bob Arnold will give a didactic session on why differing beliefs and opinions often incite anger and frustration, and how to recognize and manage our own emotions while having these difficult conversations.

**Potential Speakers:** Taylor Scott (The Urban League), Benjamin Gutschow (Casa San José), Robert M. Arnold, MD

### **Pre-Reading:**

- Chapter 5 from John D. Inazu's *Confident Pluralism*
- *Why Black Americans changed their minds about Covid shots*. The New York Times (Oct 2021)
- *Are barbers the secret weapon against vaccine hesitancy?* The Economist (Feb 2021)

## **Session 3: Difficult conversations: practical application**

After a brief demonstration of ineffective and effective communication around vaccination, students in small groups will have the opportunity to work through simulated standardized patient cases that accurately depicts the spectrum of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, representing individuals who are open to getting vaccinated at some point and those who are not. During this session the students will employ the techniques initially mentioned by Dr. Arnold and subsequently highlighted in the earlier demonstration.

#### **Session 4: Vaccine-hesitancy panel: Q&A**

The final session will consist of a panel discussion with vaccine-hesitant individuals. This will be a guided conversation conducted by Dr. McCormick, giving students the opportunity to not only hear from people who are vaccine hesitant but also watch how Dr. McCormick engages in those conversations. Students will have the opportunity to pre-submit questions for the panelists, and an additional Q&A with the panelists will be held towards the end of the session. A debrief with Dr. McCormick and Dr. Nowalk will conclude the course.