



Solutions for Communities of Color: Maryland Patient Safety Center Offers Ideas to Increase COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance Among Frontline Caregivers

*Ongoing Series of Online Seminars in Partnership with the Maryland Hospital Association
Features National Expert Nicole T. Rochester, MD*

Elkridge, MD—January 28, 2021—The Maryland Patient Safety Center (MPSC), the state’s official resource for patient safety issues and education, offers a series of online seminars in partnership with the Maryland Hospital Association to address vaccine hesitancy in healthcare workers, particularly those from communities of color.

These initial programs are the first phase of a larger integrated approach the Maryland Patient Safety Center and Maryland Hospital Association are taking to address numerous challenges related to discrimination and implicit bias in healthcare.

The first free online presentation took place on Thursday, January 21, 2021 and featured Nicole T. Rochester, MD. Dr. Rochester is a board-certified pediatrician and professional health advocate focused on eradicating healthcare inequities. More than 300 healthcare leaders throughout the state tuned in for “Vaccine Hesitancy in Communities of Color: How We Got Here and the Path Forward.”

Dr. Rochester provided meaningful information and insight on the history of minority mistreatment in medicine and even more recent survey data on healthcare perspectives among the minority communities. She addressed systemic racism in the healthcare field and how it has contributed to medical mistrust, and therefore, vaccine hesitancy in communities of color. The presentation focused on how Black and Latinx communities are significantly less likely to consent to vaccination, despite being disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Dr. Rochester shared how the first step in combating these issues is acknowledging that they exist and validating the historical reasons for medical mistrust among minorities. From there, she shared best practices for efficient communication through education regarding vaccines and introduced participants to strategies that will best address vaccine hesitancy in their workforces.

“This presentation covered a lot of the background and history that took me over a decade

working [in healthcare] to accumulate, and even overwrote some of the incorrect facts I'd been carrying in my head," said Janet J. Harding, Director, Cultural Awareness and Inclusion for Frederick Health. "I salute the MHA, MPSC, and MHEI for taking the bull by the horns and facing institutionalized racism in healthcare. The very word can make people shut down from fear or resentment, but this program was very well done."

A subsequent presentation will take place on February 4, 2021 and focus on prospective solutions and a path forward for hospitals and health systems on this important challenge.

"COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among minority health workers is a major issue facing the healthcare community and this presentation was designed to be a conversation starter and a practical resource for leaders," said Blair M. Eig, MD, President & CEO of the Maryland Patient Safety Center. "Dr. Rochester's informed perspective and compassionate approach to this topic is so valuable and we look forward to partnering with her and MHA on future projects that will promote equity in healthcare in Maryland and beyond."

"Maryland hospitals understand healthcare disparities and we are deeply committed to wipe them out. As we roll out the COVID-19 vaccines, both mistrust and misinformation could hinder our Black and Latinx employees, patients, and community members from seeking to be vaccinated," notes Bob Atlas, Maryland Hospital Association President & CEO. "We appreciate all that MPSC is doing to answer the concerns and support informed decision making."

About the Maryland Patient Safety Center

The Maryland Patient Safety Center brings together hospitals and healthcare providers to improve patient safety and health care quality for all Marylanders. The goal of the Patient Safety Center is making healthcare in Maryland the safest in the nation by focusing on the systems of care, reducing the occurrence of adverse events, and improving the culture of patient safety with organizations throughout the healthcare continuum. For more information, visit www.marylandpatientsafetycenter.org.

###