

'Take the Shot, Save a Life' Program Addresses Vaccine Hesitancy in Students

This new program enables youth and young adults to educate their peers on the safety and necessity of COVID-19 vaccines, as well as encourage them to “take the shot.”

By Dr. Charles Denham II, William Adcox, Charles Denham III, and Dr. Gregory Botz

“Take the shot...save a life...I did” is the cheer made by high school and college students, young adults, and faculty from some of our leading universities in video messages of a program tackling vaccine hesitancy.



The Take the Shot Save a Life Program was designed for our youth and young adults to lead and serve in their communities. The student leaders and participants view their video entitled The Vaccination Conversation with the opportunity for mentorship by a national student and young adult team from many of our nation’s leading universities. Student leaders who want to participate at high schools may earn community service credit for their work and leadership. Our goal is to help those who may be vaccine hesitant and help them move forward. We are leveraging peer-to-peer messaging grounded in the evidence based science. Our medical experts from leading medical centers who have undertaken a 1,000 family household study have discovered family transmission chains are our Achilles’ Heel and that family centered decision making can drive vaccination and adoption of COVID safe practices. We want to reach those who want answers to their questions, hope to overcome their worries, and those who want to learn how easy it is to book and receive the shot. The team believes the real power lies in the trust of families and friends who want to save their own lives and care about saving the lives of others.

The Vaccination Conversation

The expansion of vaccine eligibility to include those from 12 to 15 years and the final FDA approval of the Pfizer mRNA vaccine provides a great new opportunity for our youth, students, and young adults to serve by encouraging families and friends to have “the conversation”. The program is designed to help accelerate the vaccination of young friends and families to win the race to community immunity.

Our Seniors have historically been the most vulnerable to COVID, however the majority of the elderly have been vaccinated. Most people are very surprised to hear that there was a spring surge of hospitalizations in teenagers with nearly one third requiring intensive care and 5 percent having to be on ventilators. The Delta surge in late summer of 2021 had overwhelmed many of our nations children’s hospitals. This is why we need a rapid response.

Our rapid response team of college students, alumni, and faculty from leading universities have developed an initiative that builds on an existing platform of family targeted COVID safety solutions. Participants participate in either of two ways: They may watch the recorded videos online on their own without engaging the mentorship team. Or may they may sign up to be mentored by college students and young adults who are grounded in the CDC guidelines and peer-reviewed science vetted by physicians from leading medical centers. Our world class team of coaches help prepare active participants, help them identify who they wish to serve, and will be coaching them through the process of helping others in the school, church, team, or scout group to earn community service credits. A short video produced by the team introduces THE VACCINATION CONVERSATION and help answer the key questions of why vaccinate, why you, and why now.

<https://www.medtacglobal.org/student-outreach-program/tsconverstation/>



Our team of coaches and experts have produced a number of additional short FAQ video clips and drill down answers for the most common questions that can dispel the myths.



With the “Take the shot” program, college and high school students and grads are available to educate their peers on COVID-19 vaccines.

Our student leaders in high schools and colleges who want to serve in their communities will offer to play them and address key issues important to their friends after starting the conversation. They will even offer to help families book vaccinations or find a walk-in vaccination site if they wish.

The program grew out of our Coronavirus Care Community of practice launched when the COVID crisis hit New York and Italy in March of 2020 as an initiative of the Med Tac Bystander Rescue Care program focused on the leading causes of preventable deaths by emergencies.

Our Med Tac Bystander Rescue Care team of now more than 100 subject matter experts and community leaders have contributed to monthly live broadcasts and Survive and Thrive Guide courses for families.

Their work was complimented by expert opinion clips from two prior Discovery Channel documentaries Chasing Zero: Winning the War on Healthcare Harm <https://www.safetyleaders.org/chasingzero/> and Surfing the Healthcare Tsunami: Bring Your Best Board. <https://www.safetyleaders.org/surfingtsunami/>

The Problem:

Now in the third quarter of 2021, we are in a life and death race between vaccines and the Delta variant surge. We are suffering COVID fatigue and relaxed safe practices while at the same time coronavirus variants such as the B117 UK variant now called Alpha, the South African variant now called Beta, the P1 variant from Brazil called Gamma, the variant from Peru called Lambda, and the variant discovered in India called Delta are growing.

The Delta variant we are battling is much more contagious, more lethal, and more likely to infect our youth and young adults. Many young people don't know they can have long term brain fog, impact on their athletic abilities, and long-term organ damage from even mild COVID infections. Nation-states and conspiracy voices are sewing fear and myths of disinformation that have hit the echo chamber of the internet.

Compounding the problem is vaccine hesitancy such as in the BIPOC groups black, indigenous, and people of color populations and also in our young adults who feel less vulnerable yet can be super-spreaders.

The majority of those who have not yet been vaccinated are those who are likely to wait and see, those who are undecided, and those who need easy access to vaccines. We call them the "movable middle." They are not those who have definitely decided against vaccines. The vaccine hesitant are a great opportunity for community service impact by our young leaders.

The Solution:

To engage students and young adults in our high schools, colleges, and membership networks to have The Vaccination Conversation with their friends and families, dispel the myths with truths, and help everyone book a vaccination shot.

The Vaccination Conversation and FAQ videos have been posted for anyone who wants to watch them on their own. After our students play this video, they will play any of our 2-to-3-minute FAQ answer clips of our experts and college student coaches. They answer the most common worrisome questions and dispel the most common myths with the scientific truths.

They provide their personal message to youth and other young adults. They have coached our youth to listen to your questions, explore your concerns, share the latest information, and if you wish; help you book a vaccination appointment. Those who wish to be mentored by our Student Outreach Team may sign up for support and earn community service certificates.

Head, Heart, Hands, and Voice:

The ultimate outcomes of our community service can be described in terms of the head, heart, hands, and voice.

- **Head** – what do we want you to know? We want you to know about the benefits of vaccines and risk of viral variants. These lifesaving benefits so greatly outweigh the short-term side effects of the vaccines.
- **Heart** – what do we want you to feel? The hope to overcome our fear and hesitancy...and the joy of freedom vaccines give us.
- **Hands** – what do we want you to do? Vaccinate!
- **Voice** - what we want you to say to your friends and family? Your message to help them get vaccinated and to expand community immunity.

What about all the myths?

Our college students, alumni, and faculty experts have created very short video clips of their stories and evidence-based messages to those who are vaccine eligible. They answer Frequently Asked Questions that can dispel the myths and disinformation that have hit the echo chamber of the internet.

According to Paul Bhatia, the President of the EMT association and pre-med student at the University of California Irvine: "So there are a lot of myths out there. Some people believe that the vaccines give them COVID. Some people even believe that they get sterile after getting vaccinated. And some people even think that vaccines come with some sort of microchip or device. I am here to tell you that there is no evidence for any of that."

Why vaccinate?

The easiest answer is that the short-term and long-term harm from COVID are easily far greater than the side effects of the vaccine.

Our co-author, co-founder of Med Tac, and the Med Tac National High School Outreach Chairman, Charlie Denham: "My message to our youth and high school students is to not only make sure to get vaccinated, but to continue to maintain social distancing, wear masks, and be aware of your surroundings to reduce your risk. They all work together."

Harvard Pre-med Student, Dominick Contreas: "One common question I get about the vaccine is about and side effects. And side effects are really nothing to be concerned about. It's a

no-brainer to get the vaccine versus COVID. Nobody wants to COVID. COVID causes brain fog and long-term harm including multisystem organ damage. And this is something nobody wants to deal with. The side effects of a headache a fever only last few days and they nothing compared to the long-term effects of COVID. You should not be concerned about the side effects and this is should not cause a delay in you getting the vaccine."

This spring an extremely rare condition of inflammation of the heart was described in young people 16 and older several days after vaccination and more likely after the second dose. They have mild symptoms and recover very quickly. The CDC and the major healthcare organizations of physicians and experts in pediatrics and cardiology evaluated the data and continue to vigorously recommend our youth and young people be vaccinated due to the far greater risk of damage to their hearts from COVID infections.

Perry Bechtle III, pre-med student at the University of Florida: "It's really important that young people understand that cardio myositis or inflammation of the heart is very rare. And the damage that can be caused by it is much less severe than what can happen from COVID. I recommend that all young people get the vaccine. It's very safe."

The same goes for the Guillain-Barré Syndrome which may rarely occur with the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. The benefit greatly outweighs the risk.

The new variants are more contagious, lethal, and prone to infect children. The approved vaccines will protect you They are safe. You can save your life and the lives of those you love.– the science is solid. Our FAQ answer videos will address your concerns.

Marcus McDowell is pursuing a masters in Marketing Management and Digital Presence at ESSEC Business School in Singapore: "I am incredibly excited to know that the vaccines work on all races...the black community, the Native American Community, and all people of color... regardless of age...young and old...they are incredibly effective. I have had mine and except for some mild side effects, I am incredibly thankful that I am protected against COVID 19".

Take a shot...save a life...Not only are you saving your own life. The vaccine prevents you from spreading the virus to others. Young people are the biggest group of asymptomatic spreaders. You can spread the virus without even knowing it. Take a shot...and you will save lives.

Although we had to mask up for the Delta surge, those who are vaccinated will be the first not to require masks when infection rates drop.

Why you?

Our seniors are the most vulnerable, however they are now the most vaccinated. The fastest growing group of hospital admissions and harm are in the young. The young who are most likely to spread the disease without knowing it. Every age group has enormous benefits from community immunity. Our answers to the top questions including harm to the young, COVID Long Haul disorders, and infertility are very compelling.

Sophia McDowell, is an alumna of the California Institute of the Arts: "You don't want to get long haul COVID. There are the dangers of brain fog. I am an actress and that's my future and that's what I want to do. So I need to make sure that I am being safe looking ahead for my future. I am also asthmatic. That's my preexisting condition. So I want to make sure I am being COVID safe for myself, my family, and for others."

We launched the Med Tac Bystander Rescue Care college program at Stanford for varsity student athletes and now ask them how important long haul impact would be on athletes. Charlie Beall is a Stanford alumni and former varsity football player: "The impact of Long Haul COVID is extremely important. As an athlete your cardiovascular health is critical to being able to train no matter what position or sport you play. Being able to put your body through endurance tests during the off-season training is critical to setting yourself up for success during the season."

Why now?

In order to get back life at a new normal, it is critical that we reach immunity in your community and herd immunity across the nation. The longer you wait, the greater risk you and your family bear. And the more likely we will have tougher viral variants to beat. The virus and the vaccines are in life and death race. A race we can win.

Jaime Yrastorza is a freshman medical student at the University of Nebraska: "I would say we are currently in a really important point in the pandemic and if you look at the data we can tell to your own health as well as the public out there is no reason to wait so I would encourage all of you to have the conversations to look at the data to share the information that you know and encourage everybody to get this vaccine as soon as possible there's really no reason to wait."

Nick Scheel, an EMT and recent alumni of University of California Santa Barbara: "I just got

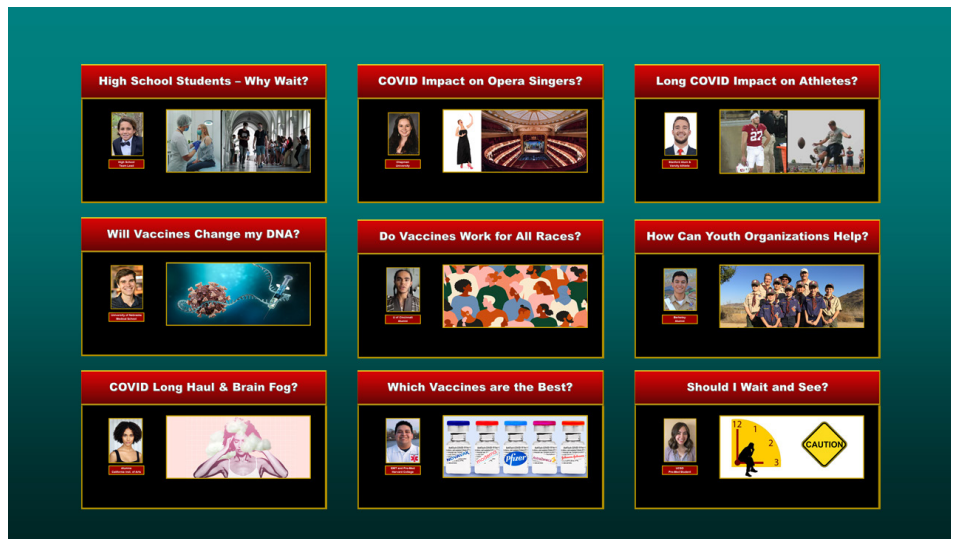
my second dose yesterday and I'm feeling really good this morning. I have had zero effects and already been on a run this morning. I encourage anyone who is worried about side effects of the vaccine to just go ahead and do it. Even if you do have some side effects, they are going to be very minor and short-term. And at the end of the day it is a lot better and getting COVID. I encourage everyone to go out there vaccinated." Charlie Denham: "I hope you all get vaccinated to save the lives of your family."

We are so grateful to our youth, college students,

and young adults for helping lead us to a better future of community immunity. We really can win this race. Our motto is fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith. We thank them for joining us in the fight against the virus, finishing the race to community immunity, and keeping the faith in our future.

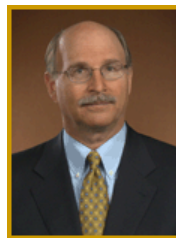
The care of our communities is absolutely critical. As we say to all of our Med Tac Bystander Rescue Care Teams: We have to fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith. Everyone is a patient and everyone CAN BE a caregiver.

Take the shot...save a life...We did.



About the Authors

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Chairman of TMIT, a non-profit medical research organization, he leads development of the Med Tac Bystander Care Program and R&D initiatives. He founded CareUniversity.

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Chief Security Officer and Chief of Police of the University Health Science Center at the MD Anderson Cancer Center, he is one of the pioneers of Threat Safety Science.