

## COVID-19 VACCINATION ATTITUDES AMONG PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA WHO INJECT DRUGS

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### Background:

People who inject drugs may be at greater risk of adverse outcomes from SARS-CoV-2 infection but are less likely to be vaccinated. The aim of this study was to explore patterns of COVID-19 vaccination attitudes among this demographic in Australia.

### Methods:

A sentinel sample of 888 people who regularly inject drugs were recruited from Australian capital cities in June-July 2021, when COVID-19 vaccines were available only to priority groups. Latent classes based on attitudes towards vaccination were identified. Multinomial logistic regression models were used to examine factors associated with class membership, and conditional probabilities of endorsing factors that would increase likelihood for vaccine uptake given class membership calculated.

### Results:

We identified three classes of participants: vaccine acceptant (33%), hesitant (36%), and rejecting (31%). Relative to the acceptant class, hesitant participants were more likely to reside in unstable housing, and relative to acceptant and rejecting classes, more likely to report past six-month general practitioner attendance. The rejecting group were more likely than acceptant and hesitant groups to report injecting drugs  $\geq$ daily in the past month (versus  $<$ daily) and injecting methamphetamine most frequently (versus heroin). Participants in hesitant and rejecting groups were less likely to report current season influenza vaccination than acceptant participants. Vaccine hesitant participants were consistently more likely to endorse facilitators of vaccine uptake than rejecting participants, including vaccine delivery at needle-syringe programs and peer worker recommendation for vaccination. Financial incentives were the most highly endorsed facilitator across all three groups.

### Conclusion:

Vaccine hesitant participants in our study were engaged with the healthcare system; this touchpoint could be utilised to encourage vaccine uptake. More concentrated efforts are required to vaccinate those who may be less service engaged, including people who predominantly inject methamphetamine and those who are unstably housed. Financial incentives may improve uptake among people who inject drugs.

### Disclosure of Interest Statement:

AP has received untied educational grant from Seqirus and Mundipharma for study of opioid medications. PD has received untied educational grant from Gilead sciences for work related to hepatitis C and an untied educational grant from Indivior. PD and SL have served as an unpaid

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