

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Vaccine Hesitancy Threatens Public Health Efforts

In Winnipeg's north end, a health co-op is spearheading a province-wide effort to combat what Dr. Fauci and the World Health Organization have identified as one of the greatest risks to public health in the Covid era.

The first Covid 19 vaccines arrived in Canada on December 13, albeit in limited doses, with more expected in the first and second quarters of 2021. Vaccines are widely viewed as one of the most effective tools in combating the Covid 19 pandemic. However, according to the World Health Organization, vaccine hesitancy represents a major barrier to preventing the spread of the disease.

"If vaccines don't get into arms, we'll never control Covid," says Michelle Kirkbride, Community Development Coordinator at NorWest Co-op Community Health. "Vaccine hesitancy—the delay in acceptance of vaccines or outright refusal to receive them, is one of the biggest threats to getting these vaccines, and subsequent doses, out there."

American physician and immunologist Dr. Anthony Fauci said that public health officials need to listen to these kinds of concerns and convey the caution and care that has gone into the development and testing process for the vaccines. He believes addressing vaccine hesitancy is paramount to putting this pandemic behind us.

With this in mind, NorWest has developed a public health promotion campaign that, at its heart, will help to ensure that our community has accurate information, the time to ask questions, and the knowledge to make decisions that positively impact their health and the health of our communities.

"We're trying to overcome a wave of misinformation online," says NorWest Co-op's Dr. Natalie Casaclang. "We're seeing everything from concerns about side effects to worries that the speed of which this vaccine has been developed means it's less safe, all of which are untrue."

The campaign will address myths and misinformation related to vaccines through a series of social media posts and interactive sessions like the live Q&A session Dr. Casaclang will be hosting on Facebook Live on February 11 and February 26. The hope is that participants can ask questions and be directed to where they can find accurate information so they can ultimately make a well-informed choice about getting the vaccine.

"With so much of the media and other focus on the vaccines themselves, Covid strains, and allergic reactions, this campaign is an opportunity to talk about hesitancy, why it happens and address concerns head on at a grass roots level," says Kirkbride.

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BACKGROUNDER

NorWest Co-op Community Health

NorWest Co-op Community Health focuses on engaging or community in co-operative health and wellness.

As the only healthcare co-operative in Manitoba, NorWest Co-op is committed to working with the individuals who access its programs and services, its neighbours, other healthcare providers and partners to offer a variety of programs and services.

NorWest's dedicated team delivers community-based services and programs in:

- Primary health care
- Community development
- Counselling and support services
- Early learning and childcare

Eligible individuals throughout Winnipeg can also access services in the areas of family violence, immigrant and refugee matters, substance abuse during pregnancy, nursing foot care and Indigenous issues.

www.Norwestcoop.ca

HANS KAI

HANS KAI is a community-led health program developed and delivered through NorWest Co-op Community Health and is available across Canada. It teaches groups about factors that influence their health such as diet, physical activity, social support and physical health and gives them the tools and knowledge to monitor these indicators.

https://norwestcoop.ca/program_service/hans-kai/