

The National Academies of
SCIENCES • ENGINEERING • MEDICINE

Standing Committee on Advancing Science Communication

Reporting on COVID-19 Vaccines at the Intersection of Science and Politics

Agenda

February 5, 2021

Journalists play a vital role in communicating to the public about COVID-19 vaccines, and currently under challenging circumstances. The science surrounding COVID-19 is rapidly changing, vaccines have been developed at “warp speed” using a new approach, and misinformation is on the rise. Moreover, current and historical injustices and inequities, as well as heightened political polarization, affect what information is consumed, trusted, and acted upon. This webinar offers an opportunity for members of the media to learn about the stories and challenges to anticipate related to COVID-19 vaccines, and to learn how to apply the latest insights from the social sciences and seasoned science journalists to their craft.

12:00 p.m. Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Laura Helmuth, Editor in Chief, Scientific American

Helene Gayle, President & CEO, The Chicago Community Trust

12:05 p.m. Understanding the Changing Nature of Vaccine Hesitancy and Ways to Build Confidence

Hesitancy about getting vaccinated against COVID-19 differs in important ways from hesitancy to get other vaccines. Participants will learn ways to apply the latest research about how different audiences perceive vaccines and the implications for reporting information and building confidence in vaccines. Participants will also learn about what people most want to know and opportunities for new stories on this topic.

Moderator: *Helene Gayle, President & CEO for The Chicago Community Trust*

Speakers:

K. Vish Viswanath, Lee Kum Kee Professor of Health Communication, Harvard University

James N. Druckman, Payson S. Wild Professor of Political Science, Northwestern University

12:20 p.m. Audience Q&A

12:40 p.m. Panel Discussion: Reaching Diverse Audiences and The Role of Trust in Reporting on COVID Vaccines

Communities of color have been disproportionately hard hit by COVID-19, yet current and historical injustices and inequities affect trust in healthcare systems and other institutions. Other audiences are skeptical of science or institutions. Panelists will discuss the roots of

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these issues, ongoing work to engage with diverse communities around COVID-19, and ways to report science that build trust and serve as a voice for people from diverse communities.

Moderator: *Itzhak Yanovitzky, Professor of Communication, Rutgers University*

Panelists:

Allison Mathews, Associate Director, Integrating Special Populations, Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity, Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center

Stephanie Fryberg, University Diversity and Social Transformation Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan

12:55 p.m. Audience Q&A

1:15 p.m. Panel Discussion: Anticipating Challenges in Reporting Changing Science and Potential Events

This session will focus on reporting new information about COVID vaccines as it emerges from ongoing trials and the roll-out to the public. The session will address ways to convey the nature of this changing science, and limit political polarization of public health measures. The session will address news to anticipate and report related to the ongoing roll-out of the new vaccines and emerging scientific information related to COVID.

Moderator: *Rick Weiss, Director, SciLine, American Association for the Advancement of Science*

Panelists:

Dietram Scheufele, Taylor-Bascom Chair in Science Communication and Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Richard Harris, Correspondent, Science Desk, National Public Radio

Maryn McKenna, Journalist and Senior Fellow of the Center for the Study of Human Health, Emory University

1:35 p.m. Audience Q&A

1:55 p.m. Panel Discussion: Avoiding Common Pitfalls in Reporting Vaccines

This session will provide insights into how to avoid common pitfalls in reporting on vaccines. Discussions will address how to anticipate, avoid, and critically interrogate common vaccine misinformation narratives, how to select the best expert sources on the topic, and the importance of headlines and imagery across different media platforms. The session will also provide ideas for new feature and investigative reporting.

Moderator: *Laura Helmuth, Editor in Chief, Scientific American*

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Panelists:

David Broniatowski, *Associate Professor of Engineering Management and Systems
Engineering, George Washington University*

Tara Haelle, *Science journalist*

Melba Newsome, *Journalist, Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting grantee, and Reynolds
Journalism Institute Fellow*

2:15 p.m. Audience Q&A and Final Remarks

2:35 p.m. Adjourn