Stronger Together: The Power of Vaccination ? Transcript

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Introduction and vaccination overview

Good health and welcome to today's edition of the Welcome Watch. I'm your host, Dr. Michael Noor. Our special guest today is Dr Obie Nadoo, he is an infectious disease doctor in New Orleans.

Today we're going to discuss a program with a group of men with whom I have great respect. Firstly, I am working with 100 black men, working on many, many areas, and one of those areas of health, one those health areas is vaccination.

That's what we're going to talk about today. Now, I know you've already made your mind up about vaccinations, whether you're gonna get them or not. And all I want to do is to give you our side of it and give us some information that you can use as you make your decision about how you and your family don't want interact with vaccinations.

For children here in California, we have almost no problem because it's the law and you cannot go anywhere without getting vaccinated. But across the country, Children are still being affected.

Adults are dying, especially disproportionately in the African-American community. The 100 Black Men, as usual, have taken on the tough task of talking to you about what's available now and why they feel that we should be dealing more effectively as a community, people of color and people in general, with these values.

And so before we start our discussion, I'm going to get some background So let's go to the table. Let's talk about something real important today, our health.

I know it's not always the most exciting topic, but it is crucial. Especially with the RSV, flu, and COVID-19 still making the rounds, we need to stay on top of our game.

Here's the deal. Vaccinations aren't just about you.

100 Black Men and the Risk Less initiative

They're about protecting our entire community. When you get vaccinated, you're not just shielding yourself from the virus. You're also protecting your family, your friends, and everyone you come into contact with.

Think about that for a second. The 100 Black Men's Risk Less program is here to make sure we all stay safe and informed. They are providing resources, answering questions, and giving you the support you need to make the right choices for your health.

I get it. There's a lot of misinformation out there and it's easy to get confused or feel hesitant. But trust me, these vaccines have been thoroughly tested and are proven to be effective at keeping us safe.

It's all about looking out for each other and making sure we're all here for the long run. So, if you haven't gotten your shots yet, now's the time. It's a small step that makes a big difference.

Let's show it for ourselves and our community. Get vaccinated against RSV, flu, and COVID-19. Well, Dr. Nadeau, that's just an overview of the issues we're going to talk about.

Tell us a little bit about the 100 Black Men and 100 black men's vaccination initiative. Yes, sir. So the 100 Black Men of America is an organization that was established many, many years ago with the purposes of mentoring young people and providing opportunities in terms of education and health care to young I'd say my active involvement with 100 Black Men of America really started around the time of the pandemic when there was a lot of information, some correct, and some false, misinterpretation of data that was going around.

We wanted to reach out to people, talk to them about vaccines, other preventative measures. And so we had a number of sessions, very productive sessions with the 100 Black Men and various stakeholders in different parts of the U. S.

and different communities, both physicians, stakeholders, as well as community leaders and activists. And this new program, Risk Less, Do More, is just the latest program from the 100 Black Men to try to talk about vaccines and encourage adult vaccines.

Most people associate vaccinations really with children. I can remember in my early phase of my career, We'd have 60, 70 people in here this time of year.

Adult vaccines and respiratory illness protection

Now because of vaccines, I haven't seen a meningitis in me. 10 years, not much pneumonia either. Fewer ear infections and the like, and it's all attributed to vaccines.

Tell us a little bit about these adult vaccines and ones that you're talking to the community about. Yes, sir. That's a great point that you made. You know, historically, 100, 200 years ago, we had really high infant mortality rates.

Most pregnancies, the children didn't live that long. And so vaccines have been a real revolution for children. And as we've gone through the years, we have learned that vaccines also protect adult lives, also provide greater longevity and as well as greater productive life for adults as And, you know, the three adult vaccines that we sort of focused on with 100 black men of America have been vaccines.

That helped to protect individuals against respiratory infections. So there is a lot of respiratory viruses that can make a person ill. But there are three that are associated with most death and the most severe illness.

These are influenza, which has been around for a while. COVID, which we all learned about during the pandemic, and the RSV vaccine, it has also been around for a while.

And we know it causes, RSP causes significant problems in infants. We've learned that it cause significant problem in adults with chronic medical conditions and adults over the age of 60. Now you have had the opportunity, well, I guess not an opportunity really, go through the COVID epidemic, and you've had to deal, I'm sure, with the issue of hesitancy.

And it's a very controversial subject because there's some misunderstandings about it. When hesitantly is looked for in the African-American community, it is not about Tuskegee and distrust of the vaccine necessary.

It's the fact that their interactions with that system itself have been negligent, disrespectful, and ineffective and insulting in many instances. And so their rage is more against the system itself, like most Americans now, but not so much about research.

Addressing vaccine hesitancy in the Black community

What methods and techniques you as an IV guy use to talk about vaccines to kind of overcome some of these arguments? Absolutely. I think that's a great point that you made.

And I really want to acknowledge the fact that there is still a lot of bias and systemic racism that exists in health care. This does adversely affect and impact African Americans.

So that is definitely true. And in terms of dealing with vaccine hesitancy within the Black community, my strategy has always been active listening, making sure you give time and space for individuals to air their concerns, ask their questions, and voice whatever issues they have with the vaccines or with healthcare in general.

And then I always try to answer the questions with the facts, with data. I talk about the benefits of the vaccines, but

also I address any concerns that individuals may have in terms of possible side effects of their vaccines.

And then my perspective always is that, you know, people are seldom convinced with the first conversation. Sometimes they are but, but I think it's really, really important to make oneself accessible to those individuals.

so that when they have follow-up questions, they answer them. When I'm doing community events, I try to make sure I come back to the community to answer any questions.

And I think a key thing also is identifying people in the communities that are trusted individuals. who can also serve as messengers as well of the message, be it in church, or be in somewhere else, finding individuals who are trusted leaders and working with them to talk to individuals about vaccines.

As much as yesterday, it was Dr. Obinay who was talking about a special program with 100 Black men always, always at the top of their game and trying to impact the community to give you information.

about the adult vaccines, things still with the realization that people are dying from these diseases, for which we're discussing vaccines that African-Americans disproportionately.

Dr. Nadeau's path into infectious diseases

We continue our discussion at this time. I'd like to tell us a little bit, there aren't that many, first of all, not that there are many Black allergists around the country.

There are probably fewer Black infectious disease specialists. How's your journey into infectious diseases and what that's been like. Yes, sir. So it's it has been a path for me.

You know, I spent most of my life in Alabama. I am Nigerian by background and I got to live in Nigeria for about 10 years when I was a child. But I've spent a lot of let me say, some of the racial issues that existed in Alabama.

And going into medical school, my thought really was to go into primary care and work as a primary-care physician in an underserved community in alabama.

So my initial plan was really primary And then during my first year of medical school, I heard a talk. Her name, the lady who gave the talk is Dr. Pauline Jolly.

She ended up being a lifelong mentor of mine. And she's now retired, but she still a very good friend. Um, and she is a black woman, um, who had been working, looking at HIV, in, uh, underserved communities.

It really inspired me and really kind of informed me that HIV epidemic at the time was much worse amongst African-Americans and people of African heritage.

And that's sort of what inspired me to go into infectious disease. In my day-to-day life and in my practice, I take care of patients living with HIV, but I also answer questions about other infections like respiratory viruses like we're doing today.