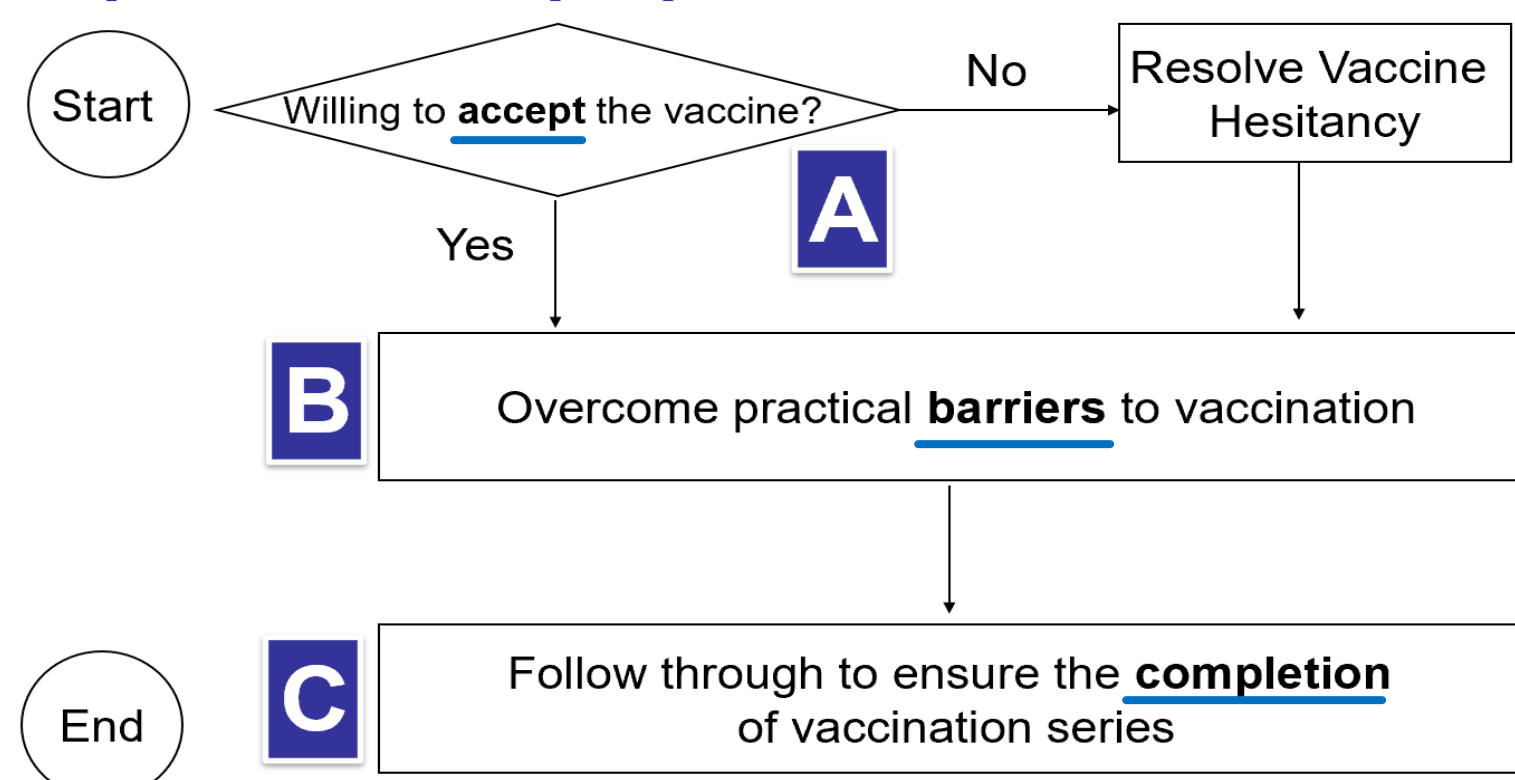


# Engaging mental health clinicians in maximizing vaccine uptake in clozapine-treated patients with serious mental illness: A quality improvement project

## Background

- Individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) are at disproportionately high risk of Covid-19 infection and related morbidity and mortality.<sup>1</sup>
- A diagnosis of schizophrenia is the second largest predictor of mortality from COVID-19, after age.<sup>2</sup>
- Psychiatrists have frequent contact with their patients, hence well-positioned to play a key role in shaping patients' vaccine attitudes and addressing barriers to vaccination.<sup>3</sup>

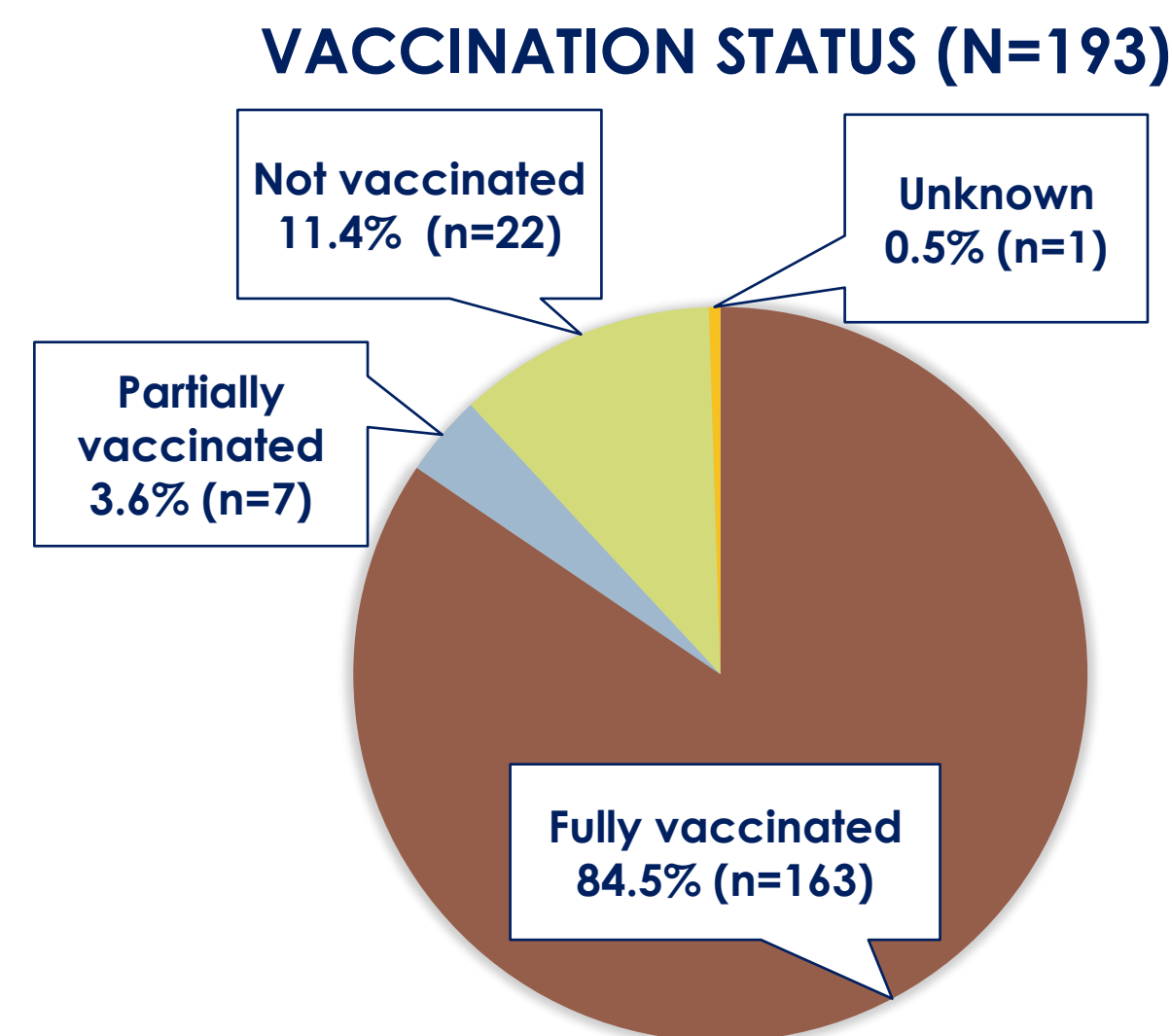
## Operation Warp Speed alone is insufficient



Freudenreich O et al. Current Psychiatry. 2021;20(3):48-9.

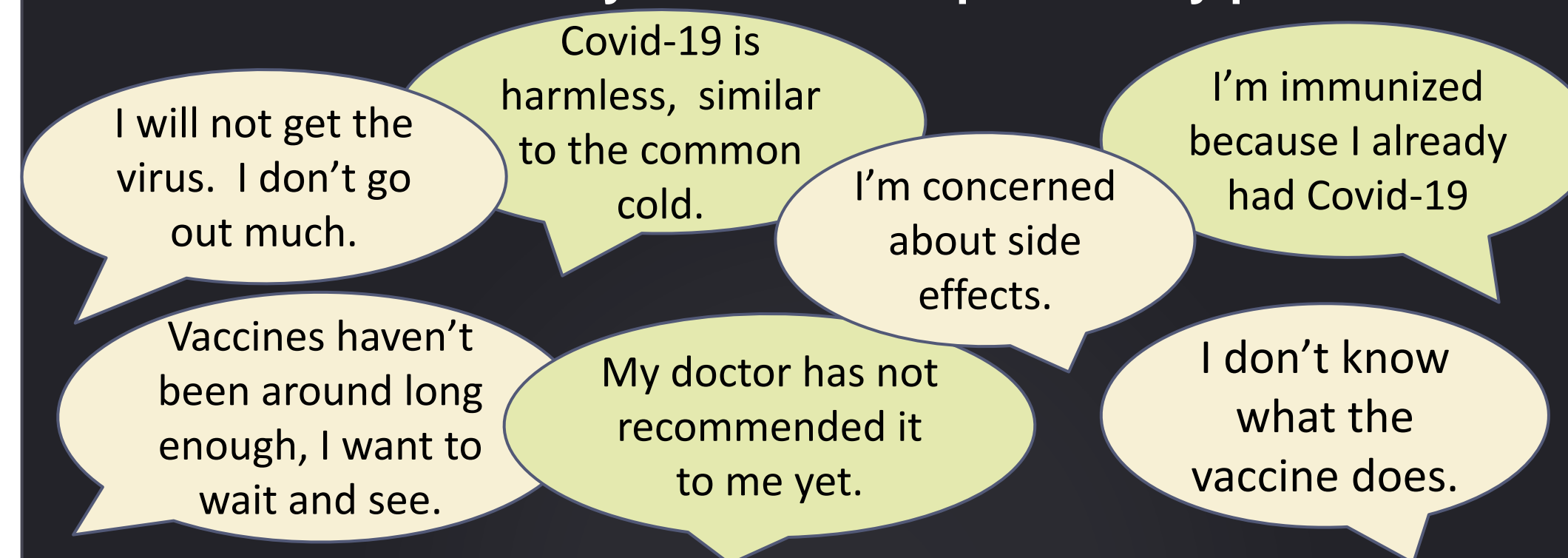
## Result

- The actual full vaccination rate in our clozapine cohort as of June 30, 2021 was **84.5%** compared to the MA state rate on the same date estimated to be between 62.5% and 77.3%.



- 3% of the fully vaccinated received the J&J single dose.
- 31% of those not vaccinated were willing to get vaccinated.

## Vaccine Hesitancy: Concerns expressed by patients



## Comments indicated assistance often needed to access vaccines

Fully vaccinated	Not fully vaccinated
Mobile clinic came to my building.	I missed my appointment.
Walk-in clinic was convenient.	I do not know how and where to get it.
I received 3 doses of vaccines.	I don't know how to get to the vaccination site.
Family/VNA/ACCS/Vinfen helped with scheduling and transportation.	I don't know how to schedule an appointment.
Received it through group home/work/mass vaccination site.	I just do not want it.

## Method

- A quality improvement project was designed to help mental health clinicians identify vaccine-hesitant patients, build vaccine confidence, and encourage Covid-19 vaccinations.
- Sample was 193 clozapine-treated patients in a community mental health center (ages 19-81, M = 46.4 years; n=158 or 85% with schizophrenia spectrum disorder).
- In-service education and resources were provided to enhance clinicians' vaccine knowledge and to apply their expertise in nudging and motivational interviewing to resolve patients' ambivalence about vaccination.<sup>4</sup>
- A population-based monitoring tool to track patients' vaccination intention (5-point scale), hesitancy, and uptake was created and embedded in the electronic medical record. This tool was used at each outpatient visit starting Feb 2021.

## Covid-19 vaccination status by residence and age

Residence	Fully vaccinated	Partially vaccinated	Not vaccinated
Independent living (n=44)	93.2% (n=41)	2.3% (n=1)	4.5% (n=2)
Independent living with support (n=34)	73.5% (n=25)	5.9% (n=2)	20.6% (n=7)
Living with family (n=59)	84.7% (n=50)	3.4% (n=2)	11.9% (n=7)
Group home (n=41)	92.7% (n=38)	0% (n=0)	7.3% (n=3)
Homeless, shelter (n=14)	64.3% (n=9)	14.3% (n=2)	21.4% (n=3)
Age	Fully Vaccinated	Partially Vaccinated	Not Vaccinated
19-39 (n=84)	80% (n=62)	4% (n=3)	17% (n=13)
40-64 (n=92)	88% (n=85)	3% (n=3)	9% (n=9)
65-81 (n=17)	94% (n=16)	6% (n=1)	0% (n=0)

- People who are homeless lag behind the most in terms of vaccination.
- Those living independently and group home residents have the highest rates of vaccination.
- While the older patients had higher rates of vaccination, even the younger patients did better than the statewide averages.

## Conclusion

- Patients with SMI need extra support to complete vaccination series.
- Implementing a vaccination monitoring system into routine mental health practices promotes psychiatrist-driven vaccine discussion and may have helped achieve higher vaccination rates in this vulnerable population.
- Psychiatric patients, particularly those who are marginalized, have much to gain if psychiatrists are involved in preventive health care including other vaccination efforts such as the annual flu vaccine.<sup>3</sup>

## References

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2. Nemani K, Li C, Olfson M, et al. Association of psychiatric disorders with mortality among patients with COVID-19. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2021;78(4):380-386
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