

Insights into TB vaccine acceptability among adolescents in Khayelitsha through a public engagement lens

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Introduction: Eh!woza is an NPO based in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, that operates at the intersection of public engagement, youth advocacy, skills development and science communication. Our programmes are youth-focussed and combine hands-on science workshops with documentary film production to both engage young people with high-impact TB research and provide a platform for young people to tell stories about the personal and social impact of TB.

Methods: Initially designed as an internal assessment of the impact of engagement workshops, we used short surveys to understand high-school learner perspectives of vaccines, focusing on COVID-19, TB and HIV vaccines. Between 2022 and 2024, we collected responses from 350 adolescents (14-18 years old). All participants live in Khayelitsha, where high rates of TB (4224 cases notified in the last year) intersect with socio-economic challenges.

Results: Vaccine hesitance varied according to the disease, with 15.9% of learners saying they would say no to a TB vaccine, 22.8% no to an HIV vaccine and 34.8% no to a COVID-19 vaccine ($p < 0.0005$). For HIV and TB, not having the disease was cited as a reason for not wanting to take a vaccine, while for COVID-19, side effects were noted as the primary concern.

Conclusion: These data provide early insights into TB vaccine acceptability in a high-burden community and suggest there may be lower levels of hesitancy or fear of TB vaccines among adolescents in Khayelitsha than were observed for COVID-19 vaccines, possibly due to TB existing in the community for a long time. However, a significant proportion of participants said they'd say no to a TB vaccine. Participant reasons for declining the vaccine suggest that vaccine literacy will be critical ensure widespread acceptance. Sub-analyses to understand if baseline levels of knowledge around TB are linked to vaccine acceptance.

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Conflicts of Interest

I am on the Track Committee for this track, and would recuse myself for review of this abstract and/or take guidance from the committee members on the best course of action. No other conflicts of interest to declare.

