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COVAX Scholars: Seminars for Medical and Pharmacy Students

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COVAX Scholars: Pharmacy and Medical Students Learn and Teach COVID Vaccines
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Introduction
• The COVID 19 pandemic was disruptive to society including medical and pharmacy schools
• Medical and Pharmacy students collaborated to distribute influenza vaccines during the pandemic
• By September 2020, it was clear that COVID vaccines were being developed
• Medical and pharmacy students had a flood of questions about the vaccines
• Students spent some of their educational time in communities in New Mexico and helped disseminate information to these communities
• Two faculty members: a family physician and a pharmacist created a virtual elective seminar for medical and pharmacy students

Objectives
• Provide students with information about the basic science of immunity and COVID 19 vaccines
• Train students on relevant evidence-based medicine concepts to deepen their understanding of the vaccines
• Review relevant policy issues related to vaccine approval and distribution
• Give students an opportunity to review related issues of interest and share findings with other students
• Empower students to effectively communicate on issues related to COVID 19 vaccines in an informed manner

Process
A core of interested students assumed leadership. They divided up tasks such as:
• organizing meetings
• recruitment of other students
• maintaining an article/journal library of interest other outreach activities.
This process evolved over time due to the changing events and student needs
Medical Residents and others were asked to join and contribute to each meeting’s content

Meetings
• Weekly virtual meetings, 90 minutes on Thursday evenings
• Announcements followed by short (15-20 minute) lectures
• First lectures were prepared by faculty then students began to facilitate the presentations
• Faculty provided students with literature and helped plan and review their presentations
• Students and faculty created a list of topics of interest based on feedback at the meetings
• For complex topics, content experts were invited

Students made the COVAX Scholars elective more of a social event by designing tee shirts, scheduling small group breakout sessions, and adding humor. For example, the theme of the group was “Adios Rona”

Other Projects
• Logistics for students who wanted to volunteer as vaccinators at COVID-19 vaccine events
• Handouts on Frequently Asked Questions
• Presentations to outside groups
  Homeless Shelters
  Immigrant Community Meetings
  Medical Student Seminars
  Pre-Med Student Groups
  Community groups in rural New Mexico

Attendance at weekly virtual meetings

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Moving Forward
• Continue COVAX Scholars as an annual elective open to students in any healthcare field
• Continue to strengthen interdisciplinary approaches to learning and teaching
• Stay up to date on current vaccines and vaccine recommendations
• Continue to encourage students to participate in community projects involving vaccines

Conclusion
• Students can have a positive and meaningful impact on the community through the dissemination of information regarding vaccines
• Electives that utilize interdisciplinary approaches encourages cooperative efforts in practice
• Empowering students to give presentations also allows them to go out into the community with confidence in their understanding of the information
• Mass vaccination clinics benefit from student volunteers
• Students are willing to participate in non-credit electives, if the topic is meaningful

Acknowledgment: Dr. Amy Bachyrycz PharmD with UNM College of Pharmacy

Presentations were done by: 9 medical students, 3 pharmacy students presented and 1 resident

Prepared by: COVAX Scholars, medical and pharmacy students, in collaboration with two faculty members.