

Testimony

COVID has been an international devastation and many local communities have had to step up to disseminate complex information and provide accurate and up to date statistics from reliable and credible resources. It has been a challenge for many including our own communities at the Muslim Community Center and The Douglas Center. I am the Co-Chair of the Health & Awareness Committee at the Muslim Community Center, or also referred to as MCC, which has locations in the northern Chicago suburbs as well as a location in the city of Chicago. These locations include mosques, schools, and at the core, community centers. I am also the Director of Health & Wellness, Administration, and Development at The Douglas Center which is located in Skokie, IL. The Douglas Center provides community day services for adults with intellectual & developmental disabilities. Both organizations play key roles in many people's lives and both organizations had to unfortunately close their doors to their patrons at some point during COVID.

Challenges have been faced within numerous communities in regards to comprehension of information, sources of information, and hesitancy. Many have expressed concern of side effects, long-term effects, and the speed in which vaccines were developed. Unique challenges that we've identified within the two organizations that I work with are, language barriers, cultural sensitivities, faith-based concerns, and with the special needs population; sensory challenges with face masks, adhering to hygiene guidelines, and comorbidities.

In both organizations we have built relationships with local, state, and national level clinical personnel and entities that are credible and have been providing ongoing information and guidance that we have then relayed in relevant and consumable manners for the given communities. We have had numerous successes over time as we have catered to the needs of the various communities, some of which include immigrant and refugee populations. The unique challenges we have identified with those communities in particular have been trust, language barriers, literacy challenges, and cultural nuances.

The greater successes for both organizations include; COVID vaccines for qualifying children and adults through MCC has been an estimated 2,000 patrons and community members. At The Douglas Center, an estimated 98% of our participants have been fully vaccinated against COVID.

We aim to continue in providing support for our community members through information, conversations, and action.

Sincerely,
Omar M. Khan, MD, QIDP