

Engaging psychiatrists in the COVID-19 vaccination effort:

A quality improvement project to maximize vaccine uptake in clozapine-treated patients with SMI

Background

- Individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) are at disproportionately high risk of Covid-19 infection and related morbidity and mortality.¹
- Vaccines represent the most effective preventive measure against Covid-19.
- Psychiatrists are in frequent contact with their patients, hence uniquely-positioned to play a key role in shaping patients' vaccine attitudes and addressing barriers to vaccination.²

Vaccine Hesitancy:

Verbatim comments from the patients with SMI on clozapine

I will not get the virus. I don't go out much.

I'm immunized because I already had Covid-19

I want to learn more about it.

Vaccines haven't been around long enough, I want to wait and see.

I'm concerned about side effects.

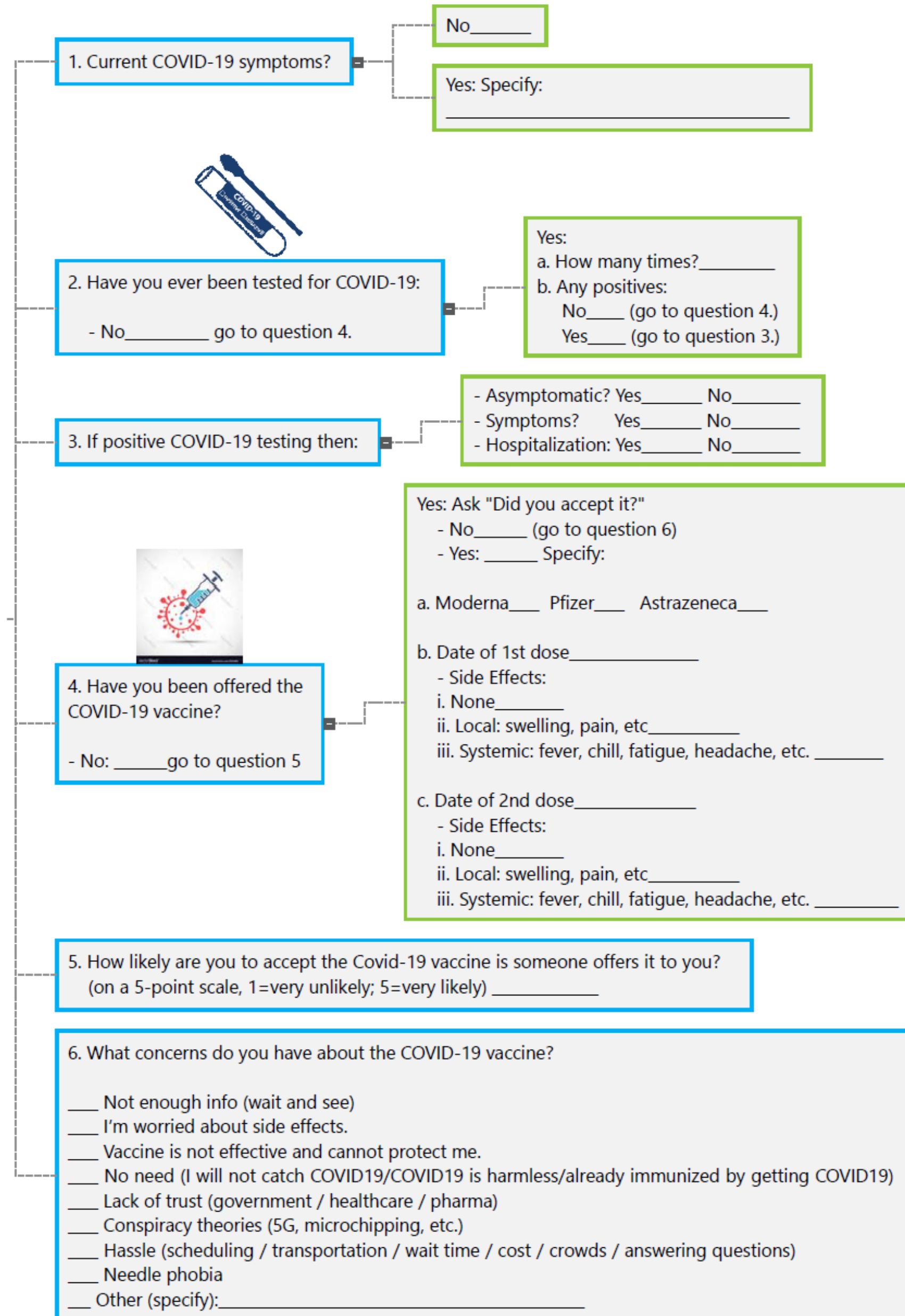
I don't know what vaccine does.

My doctor has not recommended it to me yet.

Method

- A quality improvement project was designed to help psychiatrists and nurse practitioners identify vaccine-hesitant patients and track Covid-19 vaccinations in a cohort of 250 clozapine-treated patients with SMI in a community mental health program.
- In-service education and resources were provided to enhance clinicians' vaccine knowledge and skills to draw on their expertise in nudging and motivational interviewing to resolve patients' ambivalence about vaccination.³
- A population-based management tool that tracks patients' vaccination intention, hesitancy, and uptake was created based on a literature review and embedded in the electronic medical record.

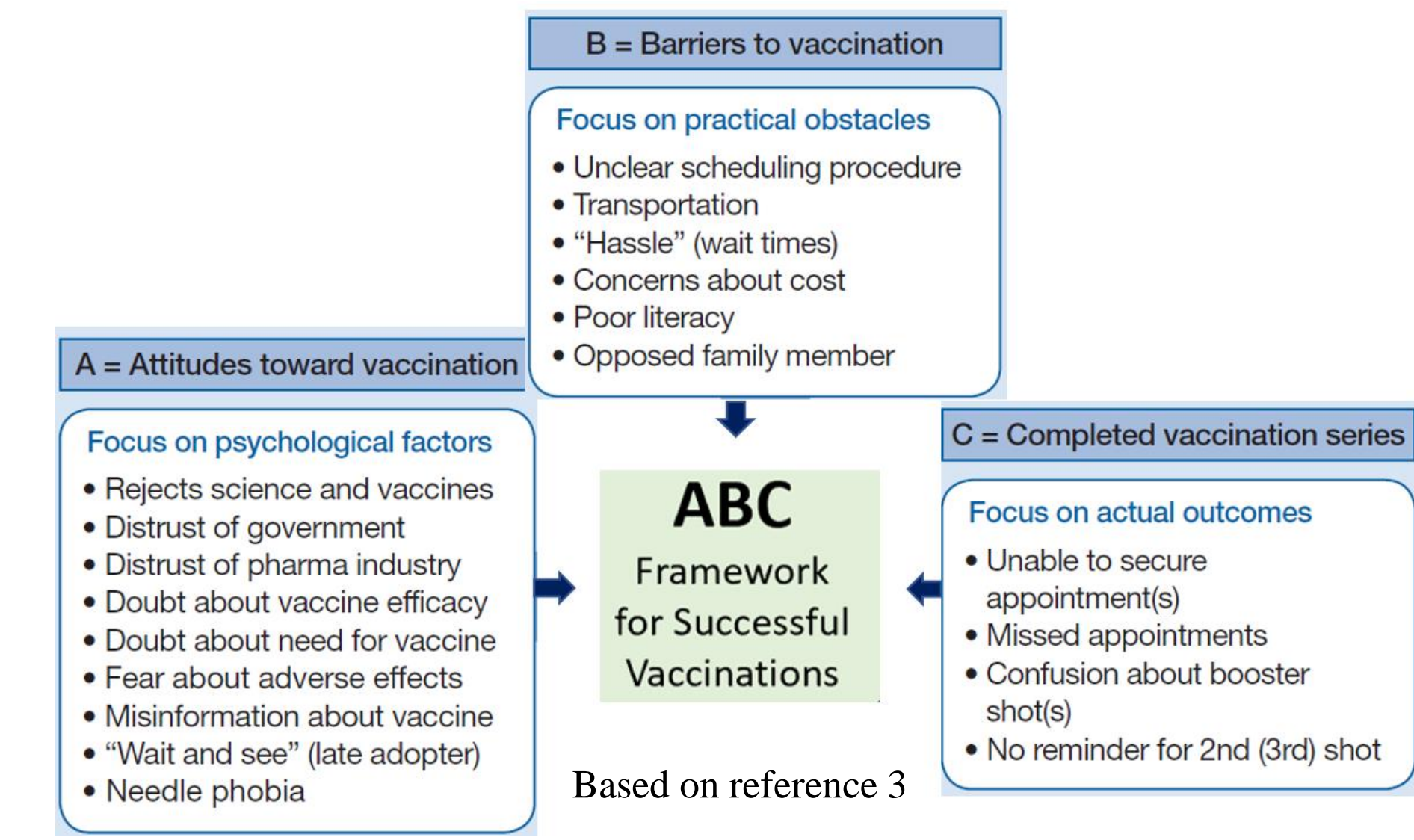
Covid-19 Symptoms & Vaccination Monitoring Tool



Result

- A semi-structured interview was conducted by clinicians at each visit based on a tool that was developed and implemented at a psychiatric outpatient practice, with progress note (EMR) tracking of responses.
- The actual vaccination rate in our clozapine cohort and its relationship to the level of vaccine hesitancy will be assessed at the end of June 2021.

The ABCs of successful vaccinations



Conclusion

- Implementing a vaccination monitoring system into routine mental health practices promotes psychiatrist-driven vaccine discussion and may help achieve higher vaccination rates in this vulnerable population.
- The ABCs of successful vaccinations provide a framework that psychiatrists can use when speaking with their patients about vaccinations.³
- Psychiatric patients, particularly those who are marginalized, have much to gain if psychiatrists are involved in preventive health care.³

References

1. Mazereel, V., Van Assche, K., Detraux, J., & De Hert, M. (2021). COVID-19 vaccination for people with severe mental illness: why, what, and how? *The Lancet Psychiatry*. S2215-0366(20)30564-2. Advance online publication.
2. McClure, C. C., Cataldi, J. R., & O'Leary, S. T. (2017). Vaccine hesitancy: where we are and where we are going. *Clinical therapeutics*, 39(8), 1550-1562.
3. Freudenreich, O., Van Alphen, M., & Lim, C. (2021). The ABCs of successful vaccinations: A role for psychiatry. *Current Psychiatry*, 20(3), 48-49.