



VACCINATION ATTITUDES AMONG UMMC SHRP OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FIELDWORK EDUCATORS: A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This quality improvement study aimed to explore the impact of COVID-19 vaccination on occupational therapy fieldwork educators and fieldwork site requirements for the UMMC School of Health Related Professions Department of Occupational Therapy.

Methods: This study used a written survey designed to explore the vaccination beliefs of SHRP OT Fieldwork educators and their site specific COVID policies.

Results: A vast majority of participants (n=196) reported they had received the COVID-19 vaccine ultimately to protect themselves, family members, and patients. Results also revealed a high percentage of respondents believed it is not the OT's role to advocate for the vaccine to patients, caregivers, community, or fieldwork students despite their current level of knowledge and confidence in the vaccine. Most fieldwork educators indicated their fieldwork site will make accommodations for students regarding vaccination exemptions.

Conclusion: The direct area of focus for this study was to discover fieldwork educators' perceptions of the COVID-19 vaccine and fieldwork site accommodations to enhance the OTD program for fieldwork placement. The findings from this study supported the notion that fieldwork educators understand the safety and accommodation process for fieldwork placement regarding vaccination status and most fieldwork sites are willing to make such accommodations.

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, pharmaceutical companies across the globe worked rapidly to produce an effective vaccination for a new virus. In November of 2020, the FDA issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EAU) to increase availability and distribution of vaccines, such as the COVID-19 vaccine, during health emergencies.

Vaccine hesitancy and anti-vaccination measures have led to an increase in vaccine preventable diseases and epidemics. In order to eradicate diseases such as smallpox and polio, vaccines rely on high immunization coverage rates to create herd immunity. Those that have received the vaccine receive direct protection from getting the disease. Inasmuch, when a majority of the public receives the vaccine, indirect immunity is obtained. Indirect immunity, or herd immunity, allows for a pandemic to be prevented or a disease like polio to be eradicated (Ames, Glenton, & Lewin, 2017).

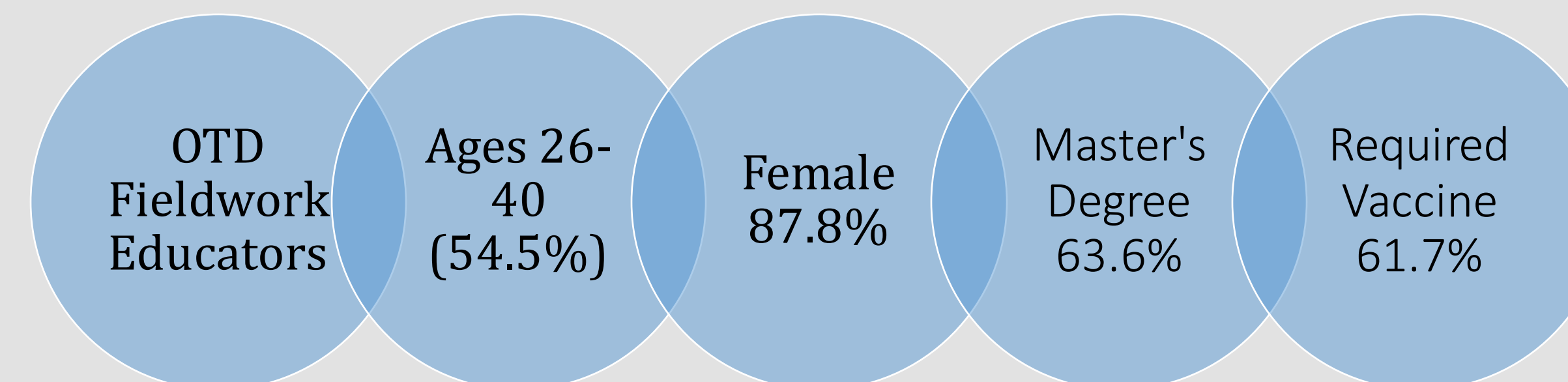
The question is raised, "Why, if vaccines are so effective, why would people choose not to vaccinate themselves and their children?" Data shows politics, communication, lack of trust in healthcare professionals, and misinformation are all common reasons. Nonetheless, the decision is complex and multidimensional (Gust et al, 2005). The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of COVID-19 vaccination on occupational therapy fieldwork educators at the UMMC School of Health-Related Professions Department of Occupational Therapy.

PRIMARY AIMS

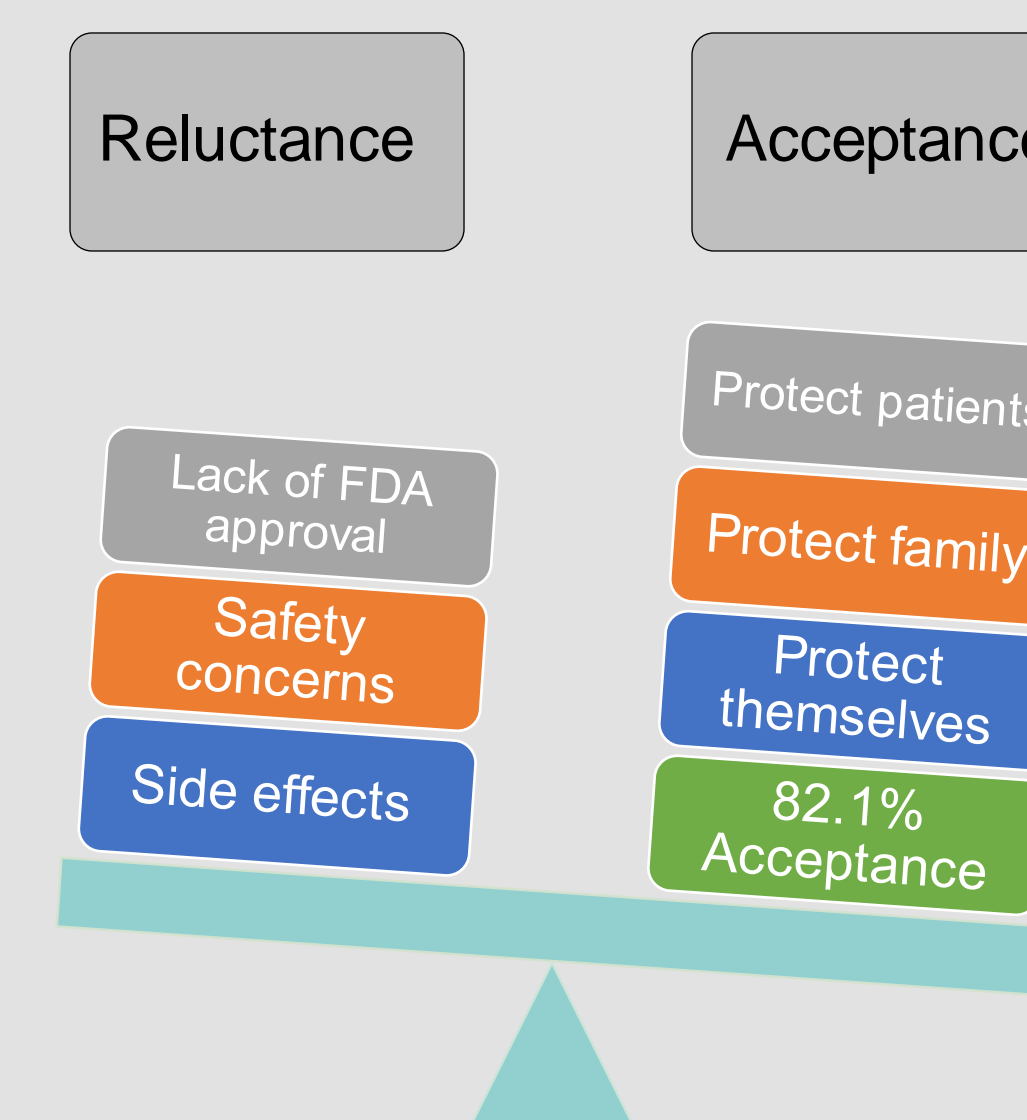
- I. To identify factors that contribute to the acceptance or reluctance of the COVID-19 vaccines among occupational therapy fieldwork educators.
- II. To examine the perspectives of COVID-19 vaccination education and advocacy among occupational therapy fieldwork educators
- III. To identify implications of COVID-19 vaccination practices on fieldwork placement for occupational therapy students.

RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

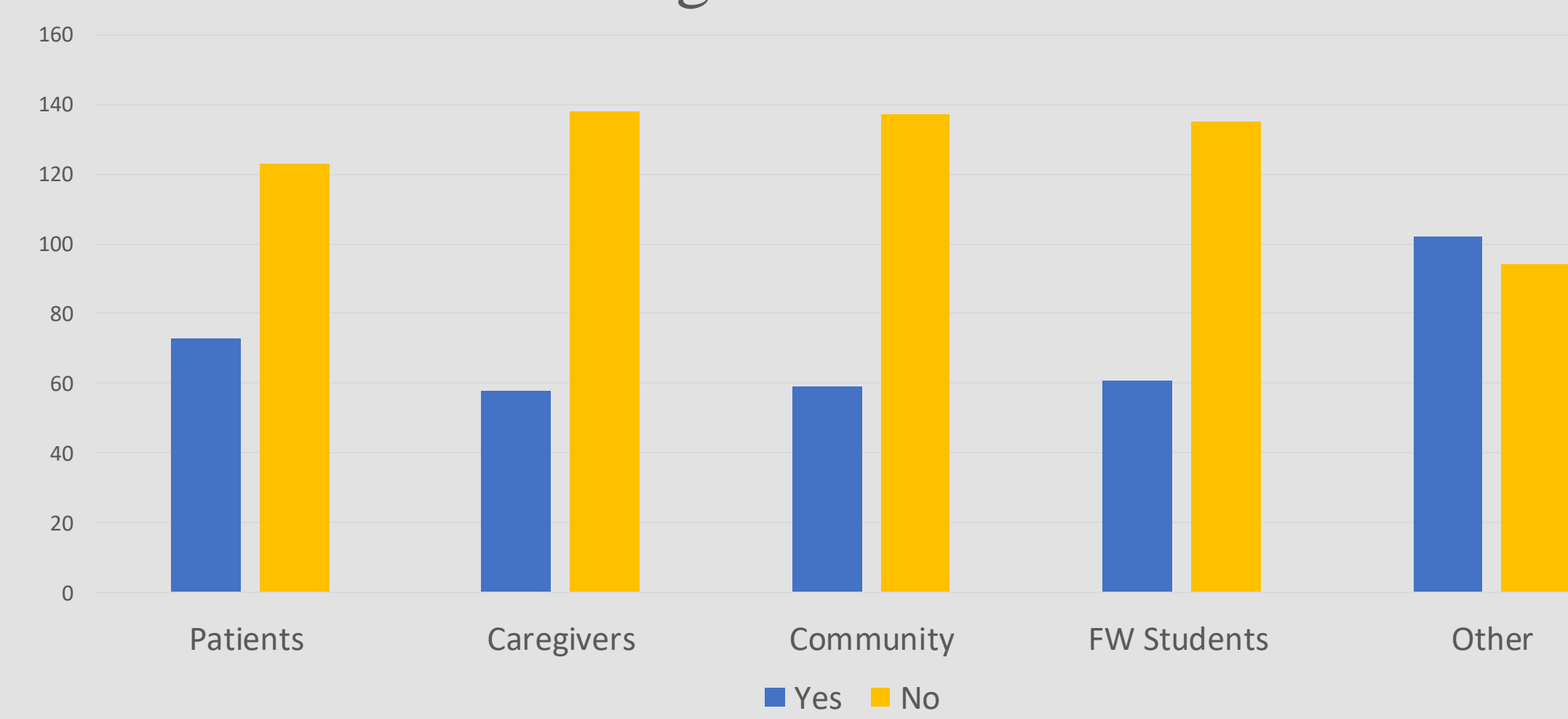


PRIMARY AIM I: Attitudes



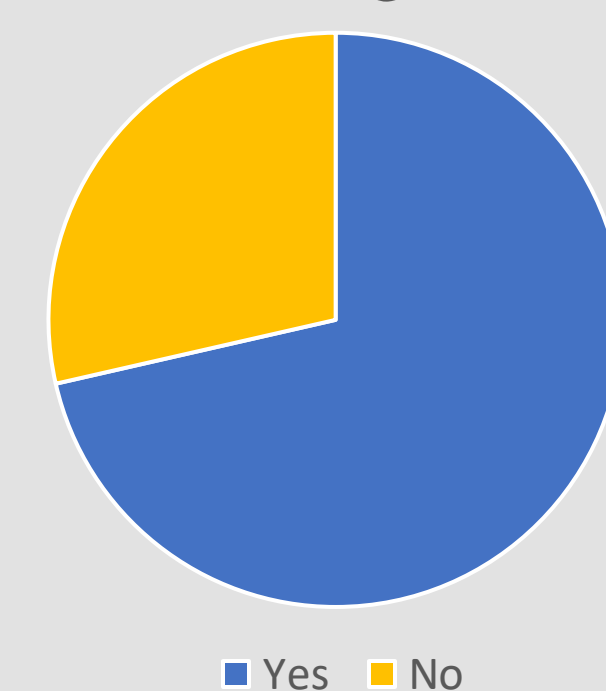
PRIMARY AIM II: Education and Advocacy

Willingness to Advocate

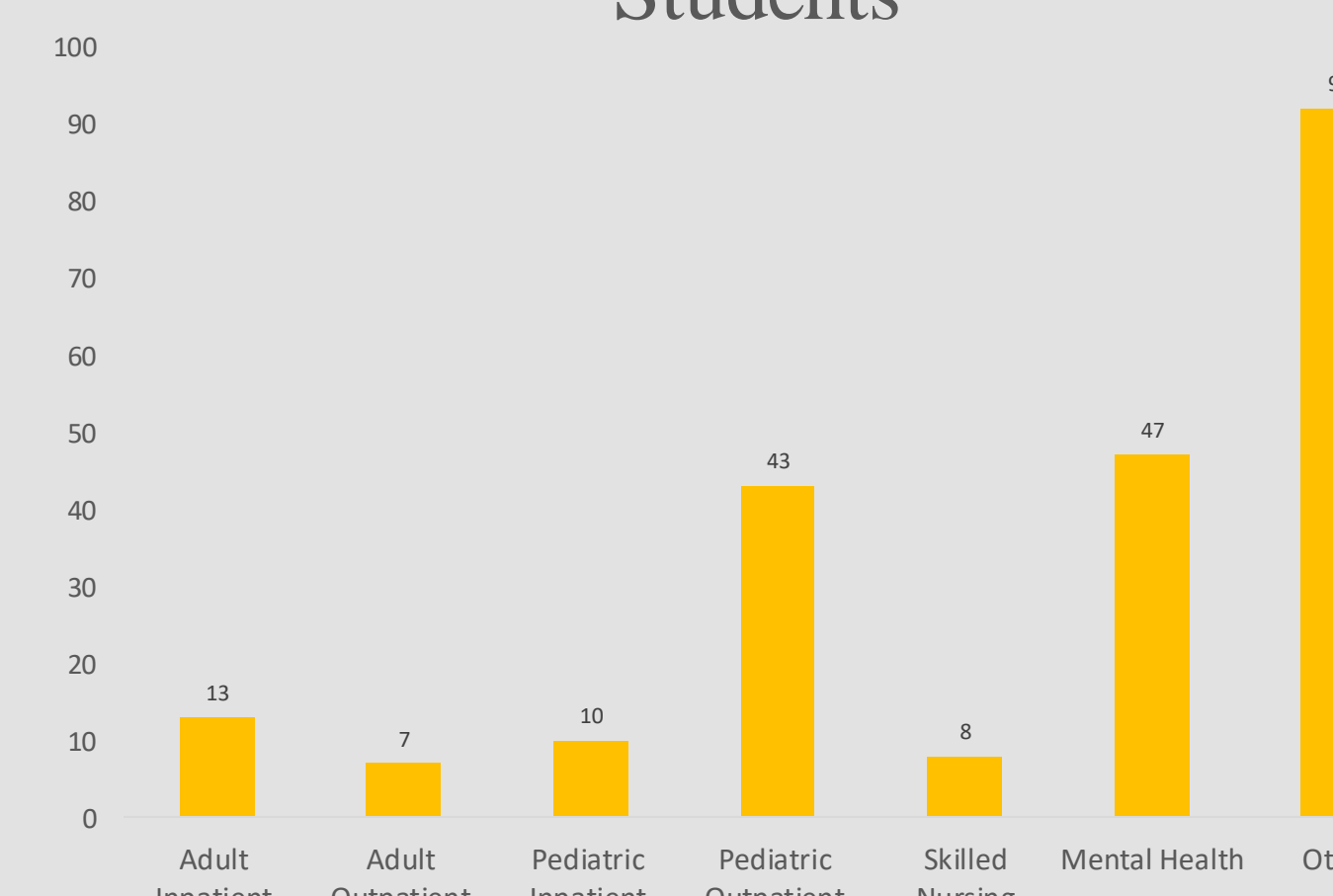


PRIMARY AIM III: Implications for FW placements

Vaccination Policy Changes



Willingness to Accommodate Students



Vaccine Requirement



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This quality improvement mixed methods study used a written survey designed to explore the role of SHRP OT Fieldwork educators in the instruction of OT FW students, clients, and caregivers related to the COVID-19 vaccination.

Description of Participants

The researchers used an email list of current OTD fieldwork educators obtained from UMMC SHRP fieldwork educator database. Approximately 608 initial invitations to participate in the electronic survey were sent out to all fieldwork educators within the SHRP OTD program.

Data Collection

Study data were collected and managed using REDCap electronic data capture tools hosted at University of Mississippi Medical Center. REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) is a secure, web-based application designed to support data capture for research studies.

Data Analysis

Information collected from the online survey was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations were performed to report results.

IMPLICATIONS

- Increased awareness in facilities student accommodation process is important for successful fieldwork placement
- Educators do not feel it is within their realm of practice to educate students regarding vaccination, and this topic should be placed in the hands of other professions.
- Educators report it is not within their scope of practice to advocate for vaccination among patients, caregivers, and the community
- Fieldwork setting, placement, and experience relies heavily on facilities' COVID policies.

LIMITATIONS

One limiting factor of this study is that only UMMC fieldwork educators were surveyed. This is a quality improvement project therefore; the results are only generalizable to this population. Further study will be needed to assess nationwide attitudes regarding COVID-19 vaccinations among practicing fieldwork educators and fieldwork site for student placement. The survey was sent via email. Technical issues with delivery addresses resulted in 89 surveys being sent back as undeliverable. The survey utilized a student researcher developed instrument (self-generated survey via RedCap). Therefore, it was not validated.

CONCLUSION

This quality improvement study provides further evidence that vaccination attitudes among occupational therapy fieldwork educators may impact development of UMMC occupational therapy students' clinical experiences. The University of Mississippi Medical Center OT department is encouraged to further develop students' knowledge of the impact of COVID-19 vaccinations throughout the program. Instructors should provide education on the effects of vaccination requirements among different healthcare facilities and the accommodations made within those facilities.

Overall, attitudes regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination is an ever-evolving concept that will change with emerging information as it is presented to the public. UMMC should stay abreast of new information in order to serve students to the best of their ability. The quality improvement nature of the study will provide faculty with pertinent information when choosing fieldwork sites.