

Reflections on the Social Determinants of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Zimbabwe has not been spared by the coronavirus disease COVID-19 which has wreaked havoc throughout the world. The country is currently grappling with the pandemic against a background of multiple complex socio-economic conditions. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has escalated prevalent human rights concerns and challenges, including health disparities, poverty, child sexual abuse, access to education, and freedom of speech. Although vaccines are an important tool for reducing the incidence of life-threatening diseases, social determinants of health contribute to vaccine hesitancy. This paper is based on scoping literature review of various relevant materials on the social determinants of health that are inhibiting Zimbabwe's COVID-19 vaccination programme. This paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discourses on COVID-19. Four main themes are highlighted as social determinants of COVID-19 vaccination: (i) vaccination priority groups; (ii) vaccination hesitancy due to myths; (iii) social exclusion; and (iv) corruption. Findings are discussed in light of the implications to the right to health and other related rights. We recommend that governments of developing countries and stakeholders intensify myth-busting campaigns if vaccination programmes are to gain currency. We further call for the inclusion of priority groups such as persons with disabilities and the elderly on the vaccination priority list.

Keywords

Health rights · COVID-19 · Social determinants of health · Vaccination · Zimbabwe