
Role of Journalists in Eradication of Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDs) inclusive of Polio in Pakistan

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“It gives me immense pleasure, when I see healthy Pakistani (Fully Vaccinated Children) as I consider myself significant part of the PEI/EPI Programme of Pakistan”. These were the thoughts shared by Ms. Razia Khan, Senior Reporter and Anchor in Express News TV, Express Tribune and Daily Express, Islamabad, who is penning down health stories focusing on immunization since her start of career in December 2022.

According to Razia, In Pakistan, vaccine-preventable diseases has been a persistent challenge, which pose a serious threat to public health. To combat the issues, the government of Pakistan always launched a comprehensive vaccination campaign under the supervision of national health services regulation and coordination, Islamabad, and journalists play a crucial role in vaccination campaigns by using their platforms and skills to inform, educate and engage the public. Their primary objective during the campaign is to educate the public about the importance and benefits of vaccination and hold authorities accountable for the effective implementation of the vaccination campaign.

The journalists conducted in-depth investigations into vaccine-related topics, aiming to provide accurate information to the public with a prime focus on dispelling myths and addressing common concerns related to vaccine safety and efficacy. The journalists sought out families directly affected by VPDs and polio virus while sharing compelling human-interest stories that highlighted the real-life impact of these diseases.

The journalists actively engaged with local communities through various initiatives. They organized local meetings, public forums, and interactive workshops where medical professionals and experts addressed concerns and answered questions related to vaccines and Poliomyelitis.

The journalists collaborated with print, electronic, and online media outlets to launch a comprehensive media campaign. They published articles, op-eds, and editorials that emphasized the benefits of vaccination, debunked misinformation, and encouraged readers to participate in the campaign. They also utilized television and radio programs to disseminate information to a wider audience.

Recognizing the power of social media influencers, the journalists collaborated with popular figures who had a significant following on social platforms. They co-created content, organized awareness campaigns, and encouraged their followers to get vaccinated. They conducted investigations into any shortcomings or issues that hindered the campaign's effectiveness. The journalists reported their findings with an aim to ensure transparency for continuous improvement by holding authorities accountable. Through their dedicated efforts, the journalists made a significant impact on the VPD and Polio campaign in Pakistan. Some notable outcomes include:

1: Increased Awareness: The journalists succeeded in raising awareness about the importance of vaccination, leading to a greater understanding of its benefits among the public.

2: Improved Vaccine Acceptance: By debunking myths and addressing concerns, the journalists contributed to an increase in vaccine acceptance and a reduction in vaccine hesitancy.

3: Higher Participation Rates: The community engagement initiatives organized by the journalists encouraged greater participation in vaccination campaigns, resulting in higher immunization rates.

4: Trust and Collaboration: The journalists' efforts fostered trust between the public, healthcare professionals, and authorities. This collaboration facilitated smoother implementation of vaccination campaigns.

5: Eradication of Polio: Over time, the joint efforts of journalists and other stakeholders contributed to a decline in polio cases, bringing the region closer to eradicating the disease.

Overall, the case study demonstrates the vital role of journalists play in promoting vaccination campaigns, combating vaccine hesitancy, and working towards the eradication of VPDs and polio in Pakistan. The positive reporting of health journalist is playing pivotal role in increasing vaccination rates, promoting public health, and preventing the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases. The efforts of the journalists bore fruits, as over time, cases of poliomyelitis and other vaccine preventable diseases declined in numbers. The journalist's dedication and the Power of their pen is saving countless lives and safeguarding the wellbeing of future generations.
