

## Bridging the Racial Gap for COVID-19 Treatments and Vaccines



COVID-19 vaccines and treatments are critical to America’s recovery. In order to build trust and ensure they’re effective for all Americans, they must be tested and distributed among diverse populations.

As part of its Equality of Opportunity Initiative, the Chamber held an event today on how to [bridge the racial gap](#) for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments. Experts from industry, public health, and community organizers discussed building trust among minority communities.

**Acknowledging racism:** “For far too long the health of Black Americans have either been either ignored or abused in the name of science. That has been a fertile soil for mistrust,” explained Dr. Michelle Williams, Dean of Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

**The response is good communication:** A “consistent message” is needed said former Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, who is co-chair of the COVID Collaborative. “That is the safety of the vaccine and the importance of getting it for your own sake for your family’s sake and for the larger community’s sake.”

**Don’t forget education.** “One of the problems we found was being unaware,” explained Clarence Pierce, CEO, Hamilton Community Health Network, serving the Flint, MI area. “In our surveys we had a little less than 50% who wanted to get the vaccine.” However, through “word of mouth from peers and family and friends telling them that it’s okay” the community is beginning to “feel more comfortable to step up and get the vaccine.”

**Business' role:** Dr. Jamie Freedman, Senior Vice President of U.S. Medical Affairs at Genentech, discussed how his company went to hospitals in underserved communities to get more diverse populations into clinical trials. Lessons learned in this effort are being applied to all the company's clinical trials. For instance, "You have to have informed consent in multiple languages to enroll patients," Freedman said.

**As for vaccine distribution:** Dr. Rina Shah, Group Vice President for Pharmacy Operations and Services at Walgreens, explained her company is "not only offering vaccine in our stores but going into the communities—working with our local partners, working with our local officials so that we can set up clinics in communities where we know access to care might be limited."

**Dig deeper:**

- The Chamber's [COVID-19 Vaccines Digital Resource Center](#) can help business leaders and associations navigate vaccine questions.
- This [interactive map](#) shows over 1,000 COVID-19 clinical trials are currently taking place across all 50 states and in 96% of Congressional Districts.