



Reply to Letter to the Editor

Authors' Response "Perceptions of vaccination within a Christian homeschooling community in Pennsylvania"


We appreciate the comments about the roles religious leaders can play in promoting or inhibiting vaccination decisions within their communities. In our focus groups with Christian homeschooling parents, church leaders were not mentioned as people who influence vaccine decision-making. While it might be possible that the small sample size hindered this topic from arising, we think that a more likely explanation is that many white Evangelical Protestants in the United States see their pastors as authorities on matters of doctrine but do not consider them to have special insight about topics not directly addressed in the Bible. Most Evangelical Christian pastors and congregants place a high value on parental authority in the home [1], including the parental right to make decisions about their children's education and health.

Although Evangelicals do not expect church leaders be community health experts, they do believe that churches have a role in caring for the health and wellbeing of their communities [2]. We heartily second the respondents' call for more research about the roles religious leaders and faith communities play in supporting or discouraging vaccination and other health practices.

Declaration of interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests

References

- [1] Kunzman R. Homeschooling and religious fundamentalism. *Int Electron J Elementary Educ* 2010;3:17–28.
- [2] Franz B, Skinner D, Kelleher K. What should churches do? Evangelical perspectives on church involvement in an era of community health. *Community Dev* 2017;48:2–18.

Kathryn H. Jacobsen *

Jeremiah D. McCoy

Julia E. Painter

Department of Global & Community Health, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, USA

* Corresponding author at: Department of Global & Community Health, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive 5B7, Fairfax, VA 22030, USA.

E-mail address: kjacobse@gmu.edu (K.H. Jacobsen)