

Patient-physician race concordance may modestly increase COVID-19 knowledge and information seeking

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The paucity of public health messages that directly address communities of color might contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in knowledge and behavior related to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Physicians have increasingly reached out to the community on social media. Whether or not these messages matter, and whether or not physician race/ethnicity affects information uptake is not clear.

Researchers from MIT Department of Economics, Massachusetts General Hospital, and other top academic institutions, randomly assigned 14,267 self-identified Black or Latinx adults to either first view three [video messages](#) regarding COVID-19, delivered by physicians, that varied by [physician race/ethnicity](#), acknowledgment of racism/inequality, and community perceptions of mask-wearing and then [answer questions](#), or answer questions first and then watch the videos. The goal was to determine whether physician-delivered prevention messages affect knowledge

and [information](#)-seeking behavior of Black and Latinx individuals and whether this differs according to the race/ethnicity of the physician and tailored content. The researchers found a small but statistically significant increase in COVID-19 knowledge when viewing the video first that did not differ by race concordance between the physician messenger and the viewer. However, information seeking (click through on links that offered further information on COVID-19) was higher among African American participants after they viewed messages from African American physicians.

The authors of an accompanying editorial from Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity suggest that this study provides insight during a critical time. As new vaccines against COVID-19 become available, and when so many lives are at stake, mistrust of institutions and science remains high. This mistrust is especially high in U.S. communities of color, which have borne the greatest burden during the pandemic. They suggest further study focusing on whether COVID-19 information seeking is a predictor of actual behavior change.

More information: Marcella Alsan et al. Comparison of Knowledge and Information-Seeking Behavior After General COVID-19 Public Health Messages and Messages Tailored for Black and Latinx Communities, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.7326/M20-6141](https://doi.org/10.7326/M20-6141)

Lisa A. Cooper et al. Messages to Increase COVID-19 Knowledge in Communities of Color: What Matters Most?, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.7326/M20-8057](https://doi.org/10.7326/M20-8057)

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