

Transcript for Vaccine Hesitancy Video-Audio Clips-Dr. Robert Ayers, Occupational Health physician, OSF HealthCare

He understands no one wants to feel coerced into getting the vaccine, but he says now is the time to get concerns addressed and questions answered.

“Where you normally go to get your health care, and where you normally go and ask the nurse or the provider there your health questions, where you are more comfortable there and in a more private setting on a one-on-one basis, kind of talking about concerns; that is where the next phase of this is going to go.” (:20)

Dr. Ayers believes these two-way exchanges can move the needle on rural vaccine hesitancy.

“If I have some sort of lingering question, try and find someone you can trust. That might be part of the success if we start giving it (the vaccine) out in physician offices, if my doctor tells me I’m going to take it, that’s all I was waiting for, and we’ve seen that in some of our folks in our office area.” (:19)

Dr. Ayers says people who are hesitant about getting vaccinated against COVID-19 are worried about safety, despite the fact 318 million shots have been given in the U.S. without significant negative impacts that can be tied to the vaccine.

“We’ve given out an awful lot of vaccines (to employees) and we only had one person call in the next day that they couldn’t come into work, and that was after their booster (second shot), so we’re not seeing the side effects that are that significant, especially when you compare it to getting COVID.” (:14)

Dr. Ayers has witnessed the impact the virus has had on fellow Mission Partners (employees) in his role as an OSF occupational health physician.

“It’s also a disease we can’t predict who is going to be the one with the long COVID symptoms. We’ve had Mission Partners who were healthy, never missed work, and they’re still having problems months down the road. If you ever asked them about a vaccine, they would have loved to have had a vaccine,” he explains, referencing health care workers who were infected before COVID-19 vaccines were available. **(:23)**

He’s also worried more easily transmitted variants of the virus threaten those who unvaccinated and we could be in for another surge.

“We’ve been through that. We know what it’s like. I just think we all need to realize we’re all in this together, let’s all work together and be respectful of each other and get this behind us.” (:17)