

Community Health Pandemic Response Reflection Assignment

Reflection Product – Non-Prose Submission (Based on Prompt #3)



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Written Explanation for Non-Prose Submission

Harriet A. Washington's *Medical Apartheid* reveals the horrendous acts inflicted on black people by the healthcare system throughout history. Unfortunately, many healthcare professionals today have chosen to be uneducated on how the healthcare system lost our trust. Therefore, it should be unsurprising that some black communities are reluctant and hesitant to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

Over the phone, I spoke with a black woman who expressed her concerns regarding the vaccine. She shared how her relative set up her vaccine appointment much to her reluctance, and then, she wanted to cancel the appointment. I listened to the woman's stress and frustration caused by her previous encounters with physicians. At one point, the discussion even shifted to talking about the high mortality rates in pregnant black women. As I heard her and her loved ones' experiences, I felt frustrated for her but felt honored to be the one to listen to it. Her words reaffirmed how much I could impact the black community as a physician by my very presence. As a CHM medical student, I know that a virtuous professional student needs to be empathetic, honest, and compassionate, which were very important in a conversation like this.

The conversation soon led to the dialogue featured in the illustration. The woman's voice perked up when she learned that another black woman played a vital role in the vaccine's development. So, I continued saying, "Yeah, her name is Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett. She studies how viruses affect our immune system. In other words, she is a viral immunologist. She understood how our community is most plagued by the pandemic yet is least likely to get vaccinated for valid reasons. So, she decided to lead the Moderna vaccine development and talk about the science behind COVID in communities of color. Like her, I want to address your concerns about the vaccine. While I'm only a first-year medical student, I will do my best to address your concerns. What questions do you have?"

She proceeded to ask questions about how the vaccine gets developed, side-effects, and herd-immunity. I managed to answer most of her inquiries, referring to the information I learned from our short-term COVID-19 CHPR course. She ultimately said, "This all makes sense, but I'm not going to lie. It's a lot to take in. Can I think more on it?" I told her to call a specific number and confirm her appointment when she felt ready to get vaccinated. When several days passed, I checked the appointment system for any update on this woman, and in her appointment notes, I noticed that she did call the number I gave her. However, I do not know if she called to confirm or cancel, but I know that she considered what I said.

As a medical student, I believe in the science behind the vaccine. Still, as a black woman, I cannot forget how the United States healthcare system has historically failed the black community. As a future black female physician, I can and plan to be a health advocate to communities of color by taking up opportunities to address social, structural, and healthcare inequities influenced by racism. I know it is my responsibility to remain informed and find innovative ways to raise awareness of such issues. Nevertheless, I will be intentional in showing empathy, honesty, and compassion towards every one of my patients, just as I did with this black woman.