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**Vaccine myths**

The coronavirus pandemic has taken millions of lives worldwide. There was a time with no hope, but eventually humanity saw hope in the form of the vaccine.

However, there has been some misinformation regarding the Covid-19 vaccine formulations, uses, side effects, and effectiveness.

Unfortunately, myths and misconceptions and conspiracy theories related to the vaccine have abounded in the country. According to a report published by Gallup Pakistan, 49 percent of the population is reluctant to get vaccinated even if the vaccine is offered free of cost. Experts say that misinformation and religious beliefs are responsible for people's mistrust of the vaccine.

Many people in the country believe the pandemic does not exist. Rumors are also widespread that Western countries want to insert a ‘surveillance microchip’ in the human body through vaccine shots. Therefore, most people don’t trust the vaccine. They also believe that the mass vaccination drive could be an attempt by global powers to spy on the world population. People are also concerned about the vaccine's side-effects. Some Pakistanis say the vaccine is haram due to false claims that it contains pig gelatin and human fetal tissues.

There are certain myths about the Covid-19 vaccine which need some clarification. First of all, it is common thinking that the vaccine has been developed in less time and is still in phase three trials so it might be unsafe for clinical use. This is not true; the fact is that Covid-19 vaccine has gone through all the essential steps of vaccine formation and the same food and drug administration processes have been ensured for its safety and efficacy too.

There are other myths too that the vaccine contains a tracking device and it might change human DNA. Again, there is no truth in it. Similarly, it is also a common perception that wearing a mask is no longer needed once you are vaccinated. Wearing a mask, hand washing, and social distancing are required not only for Covid-19 protection but also to protect us from many other communicable diseases too.

Another myth suggests that certain blood groups are less likely to develop severe symptoms of the diseases hence vaccines are not essential for such people. Again, no evidence is available that supports this myth.

The main source of misinformation about Covid vaccines is WhatsApp, which is used by 39 percent of the country's population. Unproven claims about vaccines are also circulating on YouTube and Facebook.

These myths and misconceptions about the Covid19 vaccine pose a challenge to health officials in educating people about the vaccines. It is now imperative that the myths and misconceptions of the people be dispelled with a solid strategy. It would be best to use all media tools, in particular social media platforms.

In this regard, it has become essential to take scholars, religious leaders, and Ulema of all schools of thought on board. They should be made fully aware of the corona vaccine and be asked to persuade the public in their Friday sermons to get the corona vaccine so that not only their lives will be saved but also others as well.

There were also conspiracy theories about the polio vaccine in the country. But it is a proven fact that the involvement of clerics and religious leaders has helped alleviate public fears and misinformation. The government should also include religious scholars of all schools of thought to eliminate misconceptions and conspiracy theories about the corona vaccine.

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