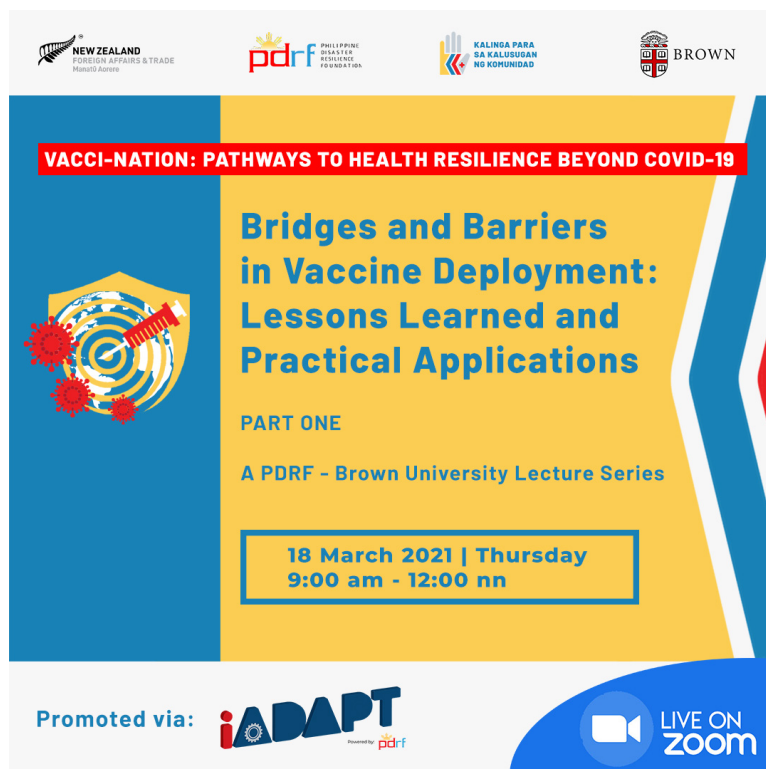


DOH, private sector, and international experts partner on vaccine education



29 MARCH 2021, MANILA—The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF)’s Project K3, in partnership with the New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade Aid Programme and Brown University, shared effective communication strategies to combat vaccine hesitancy in an online learning event last March 18.

In the first session of the webinar series “Vacci-Nation: Pathways to Health Resilience Beyond COVID-19,” experts from the US, Israel, and New Zealand gave informative lectures to explain the science behind vaccines while representatives from the Department of Health (DOH) and selected local government units (LGUs) provided local context on vaccine deployment. More than 500 representatives from LGUs, hospitals, and other sectors around the country attended the session.

“It is a united effort that we’re in and we do know that there are a lot of barriers and difficulties ahead of us but that’s why we’re focusing on building bridges. And today is one of those bridge-building exercises, by tapping into the expertise of people from Brown University, from New Zealand, from Israel, and from the Department of Health,” said PDRF Chief Resilience Officer Guillermo Luz.

During the webinar, Brown University faculty members, Dr. John Foggie and Dr. Ramu Kharel, first tackled the scientific basis of the COVID-19 vaccines, lessons on logistics, and patient expectations after being vaccinated. Dr. Stephanie Garbern, also from Brown University, then discussed boosting vaccine confidence through

effective public communication strategies. Dr. Odeda Benin-Goren from Israel and Lev Zhuravsky from New Zealand shared best practices and challenges encountered during the vaccine rollouts in their respective countries.

In the local context, Dr. Chris Sorongnon from Bacolod City emphasized the need to educate health workers at the barangay level to combat misinformation on social media while Mr. Vincent Emnas from Ormoc City cited the challenges of a rural city in procuring vaccines and communicating to citizens who do not have internet access.

Moreover, Dr. Aleli Sudiagal from DOH identified challenges of the Philippine's national vaccination program, citing data management as the greatest challenge. He also commented on the inequity of global vaccine supply, with richer countries getting a greater share of vaccines than their poorer counterparts.

In his opening message, David Pennycook, Second Secretary of the New Zealand Embassy, reiterated the need for collaboration during this global crisis.

"COVID-19 has and will continue to exacerbate existing inequalities for vulnerable groups," he said. "So whilst it is heartbreaking to see the huge impact COVID-19 has had in so many countries, it is reassuring to see our support is utilized in areas of training."

Dr. Ronald Law, the OIC Director of the Health Emergency and Management Bureau of the Department of Health, talked about the importance for healthcare workers to be informed about vaccine developments.

"The role of science behind the vaccines is critical. All stakeholders, particularly in local government units and hospitals, need to be the most knowledgeable on the science behind these vaccines because they're the experts the public looks up to for guidance," said Dr. Law.

PDRF President Rene "Butch" Meily emphasized the importance of learning and working together to combat the pandemic through vaccines. "The pandemic has made clear that we are all part of the human family and that our fate, and that of our children, is linked to the safe vaccination and economic recovery of everyone in our country and in nations around the planet," he said.

This webinar series will cover essential information on COVID-19 and will also be converted into an e-learning course that will be uploaded to PDRF's digital learning platform, iADAPT. The next session is scheduled for April and additional resources for LGU and medical frontliners will also be made available.

Project K3 or Kalinga para sa Kalusugan ng Komunidad is an initiative of PDRF and New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Aid Programme that aims to

strengthen the health system capacities of LGUs, hospitals, and communities around the country to deal with the COVID-19 crisis and future disruptions through innovative training and community education.

Project K3 is also working with DOH and Ingat Angat Campaign in promoting accurate COVID-19 information and vaccines. Project K3 has been recently recognized by the National Task Force against COVID-19 as a vital private sector initiative in combatting the pandemic.

Individuals interested in taking this online course and earning a certificate may access it through <https://iadapt.pdrf.org/courses/bridges-and-barriers-in-vaccine-deployment-lessons-learned-and-practical-applications>

To learn more about Project K3's upcoming activities, visit <https://iadapt.pdrf.org/k3-briefing/>