Abstract

Geographic clusters of unvaccinated children are a source for outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) that can cause suffering to unvaccinated individuals, including infants too young to be vaccinated, individuals who are immune compromised, and those with waning immunity. This practicum project explores the beliefs and attitudes of parents making immunization decisions in a rural area of Alaska with elevated school immunization exemption rates. The Health Belief Model theory informed the study design, methods, and analysis. Individual semi-structured interviews provided rich insights. Parents who are vaccine hesitant do not believe that VPDs are a threat, do not believe that vaccines are effective, and believe that vaccine barriers far exceed any benefits. Understanding parental immunization viewpoints and perceptions is essential for planning public health programs to achieve high vaccination coverage levels at local, state, and national levels, thereby preventing a resurgence of the burden of VPDs.