#Team Vaccine: Exploring the History of Toronto’s COVID-19 Vaccination Initiative through Social Media

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To vaccinate North America’s fourth-largest city against COVID-19, unprecedented collaborations galvanized rapidly among previously siloed community and academic healthcare institutions toward a common goal. Social media platforms such as Twitter played a central role throughout the pandemic in the spread of critical public health information among health professionals and the public at large. The influence of social media extended as an important digital space that documented vaccination initiatives from their start in the winter of 2020. One of the most common thematic metadata tags (hashtags) utilized on social media globally during the early months of COVID vaccinations was “#TeamVaccine”. This work aimed to characterize the use of #TeamVaccine on Twitter, as a key source to tell the story of Toronto’s mass vaccination initiative. Analyzing ≈15,400 posts collected from Twitter’s Application Programming Interface (API), this work focused on describing the emergence, geographic spread and institutional engagement with #TeamVaccine, as well as identification of key local “influencers”. Initial sentiment analysis and content analysis of posts was conducted. This work acts as a pilot step toward a broader historical assessment of what “Team Vaccine” may have produced as a health system concept, and its existence as a real-life collaborative entity in Toronto. Future “Team Vaccine” research may focus on the porosity between health disciplines and institutions, discursive analysis related to novel institutional collaborations, the possible emergence of pan-professional competencies amid vaccine clinic re-deployment and an expanded social network analysis of Twitter data.

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