

# CienciaPR launches a new educational campaign to promote vaccination against COVID-19 <sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[2]</sup>



To inspire confidence in COVID-19 vaccines and promote vaccination as an act of solidarity, the non-profit organization Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR) has just launched the second public service campaign of the "**Aquí Nos Cuidamos Toolkit**" under the theme, "**Vacúnate, por ti y por mí**" (**Get vaccinated, for you and for me**) <sup>[3]</sup>. This effort coincides with the World Immunization Week declared by the World Health Organization and celebrated from April 25 to May 1 this year.

**"Vacúnate, por ti y por mí"** is comprised of multimedia content that is easy to use by both Puerto Rican communities and the media and includes audios, videos, infographics and several educational guides that explain important topics about vaccines in a simple and accessible way. Among the educational guides are **"I've been vaccinated, now what?"** which discusses what it means to be fully vaccinated, activities we can do once we have completed our vaccination, traveling once vaccinated, why we need to keep wearing masks after getting the vaccine, and scientific facts about vaccines. Other guides answer frequently asked questions and myths about COVID-19 vaccines.

The campaign includes topics such as herd immunity, why vaccination is not synonymous with immunity, vaccines and the coronavirus variants, the importance of following preventive measures even after vaccination, and how vaccines not only protect individuals but the community, among others.

Similarly, content on **"How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?"** is presented to educate about the safety, ingredients and technology used in each of the vaccines authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the prevention of coronavirus disease. Other content answers, **"How effective are COVID 19 vaccines?"** and explains the differences and meaning of the terms vaccine efficacy and vaccine effectiveness.

"Vaccines save millions of lives each year globally. Specifically, the vaccines developed and authorized for COVID-19 prevention are an essential tool to reach the end of the pandemic and their benefits far outweigh the few risks of getting them," explained Dr. Mónica Feliú Mójér, scientist, Director of Communications at CienciaPR and leader of the project. "It is encouraging that many people are getting vaccinated. However, many questions, mistrust and myths persist about COVID-19 vaccines. That is why the **"Vacúnate, por ti y por mí"** <sup>[3]</sup> campaign focuses on answering these questions in a scientific but simple way. In addition, the campaign emphasizes that vaccination is an act of solidarity; that by getting vaccinated we promote the common good, because getting out of this pandemic requires a collective effort: from individuals to the government," said Feliú Mójér.

"Educational efforts such as Aquí Nos Cuidamos are essential to promote confidence in vaccines and to encourage people to get vaccinated against the coronavirus," said Dr. Carmen D. Zorrilla, professor at the University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine. "For example, it is important for people to understand that although vaccines were developed and authorized relatively quickly because of the public health emergency, they went through rigorous processes to ensure their safety and efficacy. Also, we know that getting vaccinated is good for everyone, because by getting vaccinated we also protect those who cannot yet do so, such as children under 16 years of age", added the physician.

## **Science and prevention to reach the end of the pandemic**

In the past few weeks, Puerto Rico has experienced a spike in cases, hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19. Community transmission are at a critical level, a situation that is complicated by the presence of variants that are more contagious.

"Given this reality, both the content of "**Vacúnate, por ti y por mí**" and of our previous campaign "Distancia física, no social" (Physical, no social distance) represent an accompaniment, a kind of kit to reach the end of the pandemic with science and prevention. Both campaigns emphasize the essential tools that science gives us and that we need to control COVID-19: prevention, detection through testing and vaccination," said Edmy Ayala Rosado, coordinator of Aquí Nos Cuidamos and science communication specialist for CienciaPR.

It should be noted that all the content of the "**Aquí Nos Cuidamos Toolkit**" is based on the most recent scientific data contextualized to the Puerto Rican reality and culture. The toolkit has been developed by experts in science, public health and communications, with input from leaders, community organizations and non-profit entities. Aquí Nos Cuidamos has the support of several entities such as the Puerto Rico Public Health Trust, Mercy Corps Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rico Psychological Association and Taller Salud, among others.

Subsequent themes of the toolkit will focus on mental health and emotional well-being, and on providing tools for vulnerable and marginalized communities to use science to address future emergencies. All materials can be downloaded for free through the **aquinoscuidamos.org** website.

### **Ambassadors and workshops to promote prevention and vaccination in the community**

Recently, CienciaPR selected 10 community leaders as part of the **Aquí Nos Cuidamos Community Ambassadors Program**. This program seeks to empower and train community leaders to use the toolkit for COVID-19 prevention and give them the skills and resources necessary to use science to inform their decisions and responses to future challenges and emergencies. This first group of leaders represent vulnerable and marginalized communities in the municipalities of Loíza, Mayagüez, San Juan, Trujillo Alto, Ponce and Yabucoa, and includes leaders from Puerto Rico's deaf community.

"At a time when scientists and health experts are recommending stricter mitigation measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus, we recognize that communities around the archipelago are developing their own initiatives and taking action," said Dr. Feliú Mójer. "Through the Ambassadors Program and the toolkit we want to accompany them and empower their leaders to be more effective."

In addition to the Ambassador Program, CienciaPR is offering workshops to train diverse populations on how to use and apply the content of the Aquí Nos Cuidamos Toolkit to their contexts and realities. The next virtual workshop "Aquí Nos Cuidamos: una herramienta para la prevención de COVID-19" (Aquí Nos Cuidamos: A tool for the prevention of COVID-19) will be held on Wednesday, May 12 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. through the digital platform ZOOM. Those interested in participating can register in the **Foros y Eventos (Forums and Events)** section of the **aquinoscuidamos.org** <sup>[4]</sup> portal. The workshop is open to the public.

All of Aquí Nos Cuidamos' content is available for free download on the [aquinoscuidamos.org](http://aquinoscuidamos.org) portal and can be found and shared on social media under #AquiNosCuidamosPR. For more information, visit [www.aquinoscuidamos.org](http://www.aquinoscuidamos.org) <sup>[4]</sup> or [www.cienciapr.org](http://www.cienciapr.org) <sup>[5]</sup>. Also, you can follow CienciaPR on Facebook and Twitter as @CienciaPR and on Instagram as @ciencia.pr.

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