

The HEAR Technique: Train-the-Trainer

Engaging with patients who are vaccine hesitant





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A large, diverse group of stylized people of various ages, ethnicities, and abilities standing together, representing a community. The group includes men, women, and children of different ages, some with disabilities (e.g., a person in a wheelchair, a person with a cane), and some holding hands or embracing. The people are dressed in casual, colorful clothing. The background is a solid light blue.

Meet Derrick



- 63-year-old man (he/him)
- Medical Conditions: Uncontrolled hypertension, COPD (GOLD class B), sleep apnea
- Low attendance of pulmonary visits + a lot of ED visits
- Poor past experiences with health care
- When you advise that he gets the influenza and COVID vaccines, he says, “No thanks.”

Thought Exercise: Balancing motivation



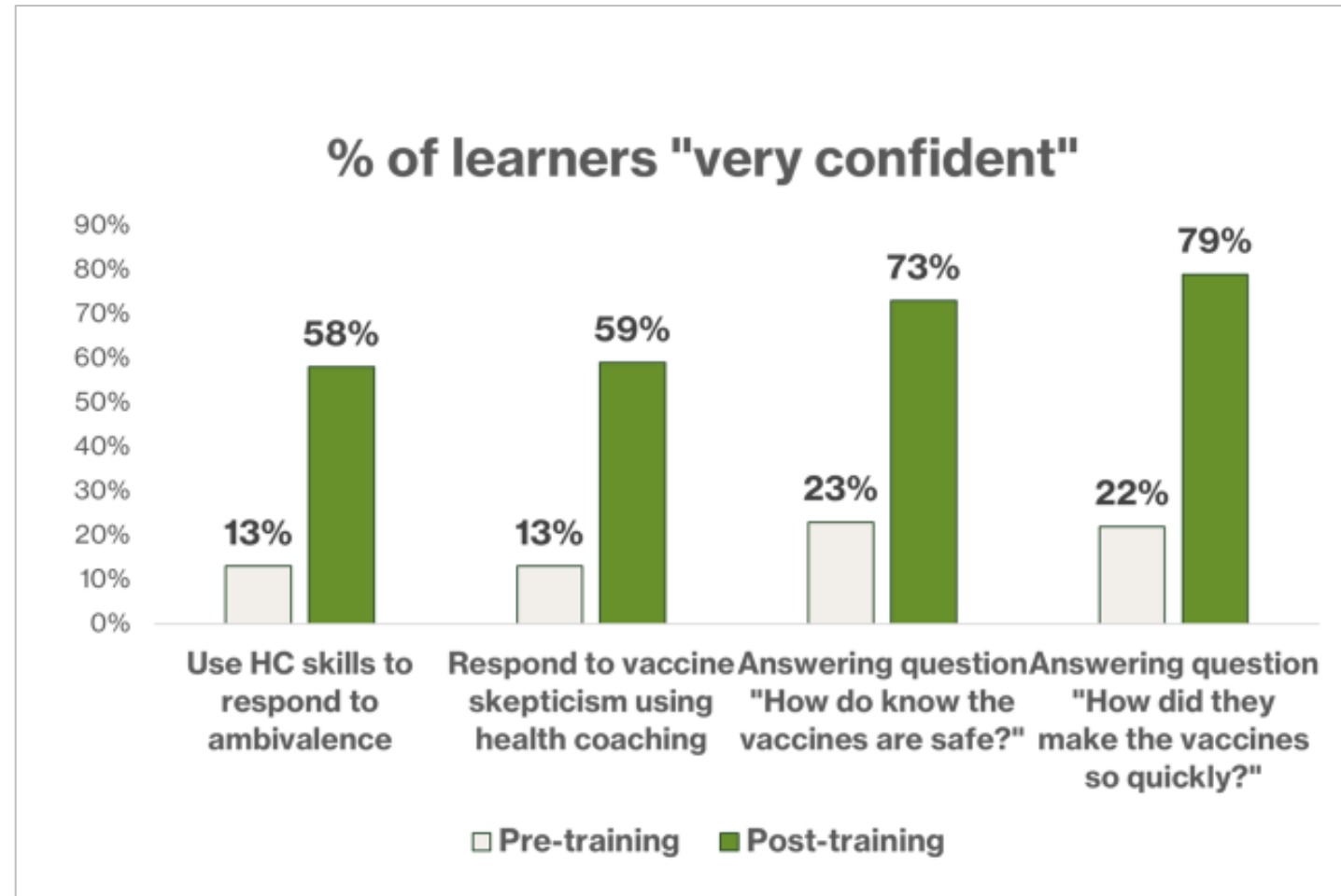


Ready to hear new
information

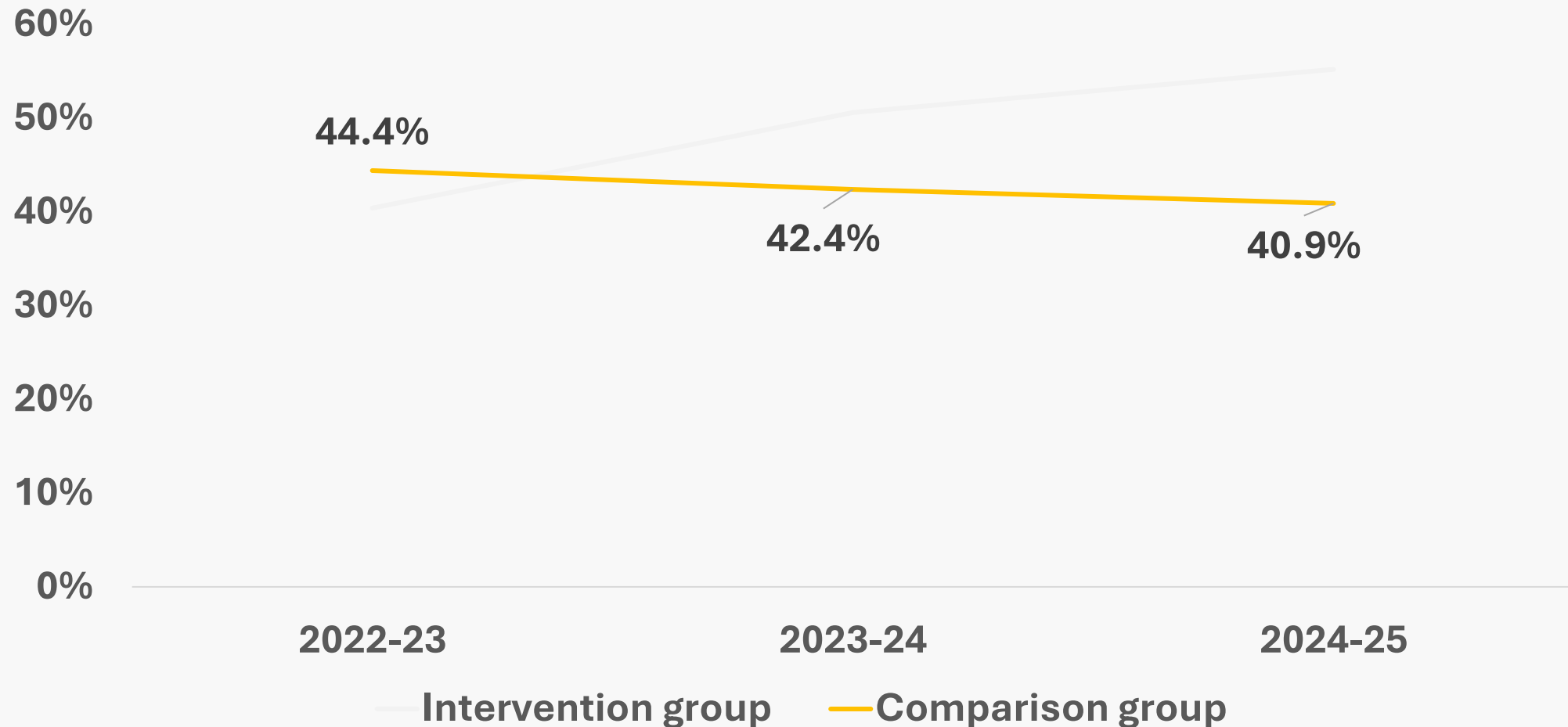
“No thank you”

The HEAR Technique

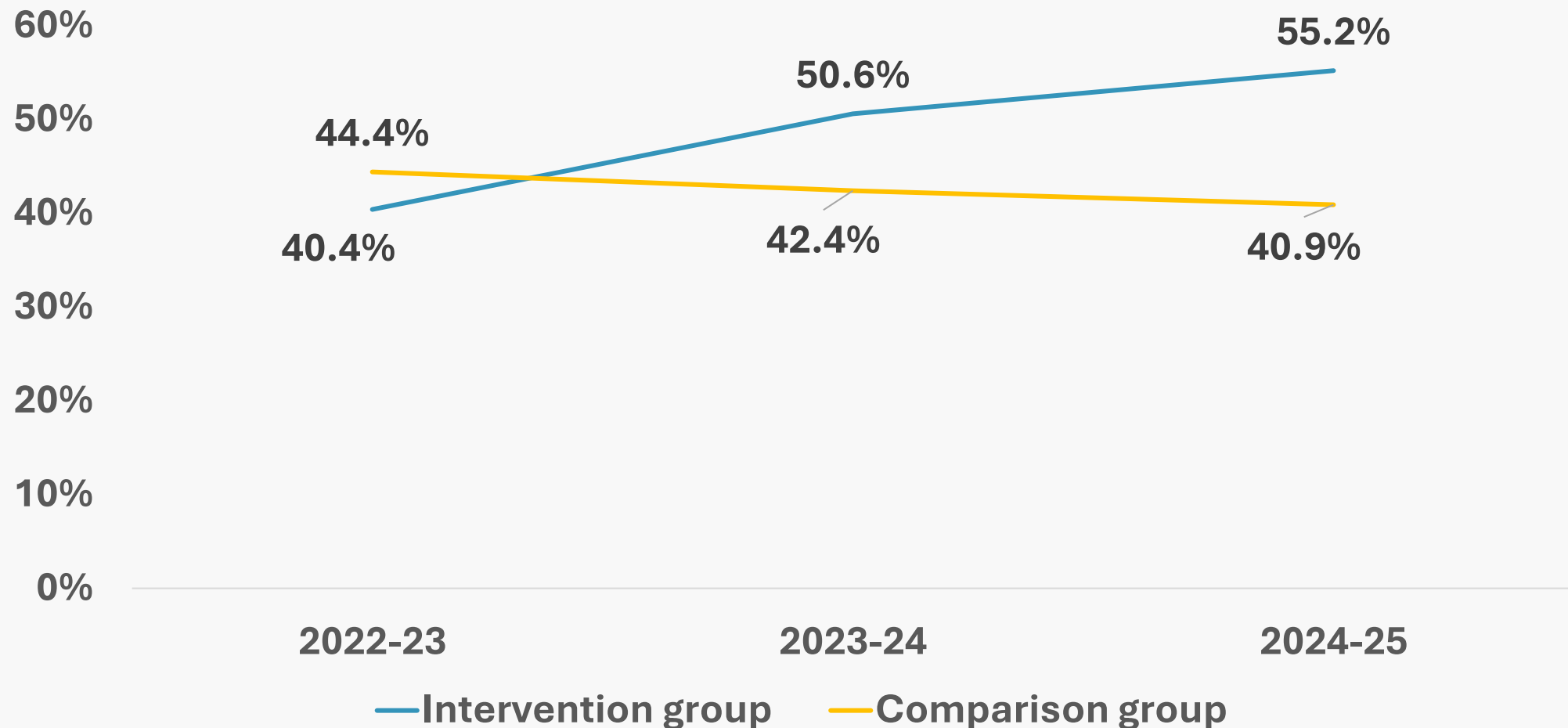
- Goal: Brief (1-2 minute) intervention to engage people who are skeptical of vaccines in discussion
- Used to train 2,500 COVID-19 vaccine outreach workers in California
- Reported it gave them more confidence to engage people in conversation.



Influenza vaccine rates 2022-25: SFHN sites taking part in HEAR training v. comparison sites



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What is the HEAR Technique?

H

Hear: Ask open-ended questions to invite the person to share their thoughts and feelings.

E

Express gratitude: Thank the person for sharing their thoughts and concerns openly. Acknowledge their openness/vulnerability as a gift.

A

Ask about pros & cons: Ask the person about their pros and cons. Always start with the cons.

R

Respond: Echo back what you've heard. Then ask permission to share information.

The HEAR Technique in action

H

Hear: “Could you share a little more? What are your concerns?”
“You’re (frustrated, angry, concerned)...”

E

Express gratitude: “I appreciate you sharing that with me.”
“That’s a great question! You’ve been thinking about this a lot.”

A

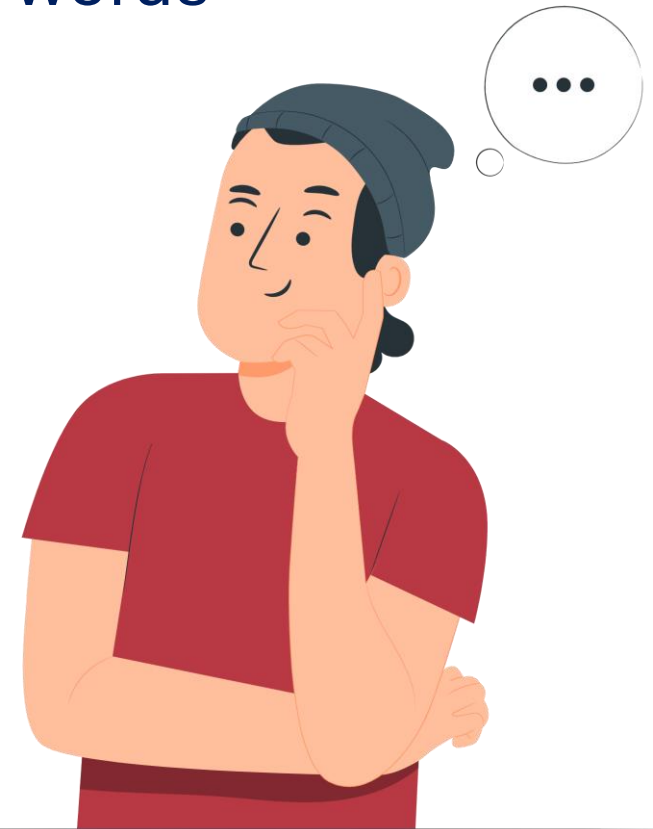
Ask about pros & cons: “What would be the bad things about getting the vaccine?” “What about the good things?”

R

Respond: “Let me see if I’m hearing this correctly, on the one hand...on the other hand...” “Would it be okay to share some information about your concern?”

Open-ended questions

- Invite others to “tell their story” in their own words
- Create dialogue
- Provide more information
- Can be more efficient
- Require active listening



Open-ended questions: Quick practice

Do you know why the influenza vaccine is important?



What have you heard about the flu vaccine?

Can you come back in a month for the second shot?



When can we schedule the second shot?

Do you have any questions?



What questions are on your mind right now?

Resources

1. HEAR Technique cheat sheet
2. Learner guide with practice scenarios and FAQs

Keep in mind...

- Keep responses simple
- It's okay to say, "I don't know."
- Refer to trusted sources
- Encourage the patient to ask their provider

The **HEAR** Technique

Developed by the [Center for Excellence in Primary Care](#), the HEAR Technique is a tool to help vaccine outreach workers respectfully engage with individuals who are expressing skepticism or strong emotions.

STEP	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
 HEAR	Ask open-ended questions to invite the person to share their thoughts and feelings. Listen carefully and reflect back the content or feeling of what they share.	"Could you tell me more about your concerns?" "When you hear the word safety, could you tell me more about what that means to you?"
 EXPRESS GRATITUDE	Thank the person for sharing their thoughts or concerns. When someone shares their concerns or their skepticism with us, we should consider it a gift.	"Thank you for sharing your concerns with me." "That's a great question. You've been thinking carefully about this."
 ASK ABOUT PROS & CONS	Ask about the person's pros and cons for getting the vaccine (most people have something on both side of the balance scale, even if they only express the cons!). Begin with the cons.	"What concerns you about getting the vaccine?" "What are the good things about getting the vaccine?"
 RESPOND	Summarize what you've heard. Ask permission to share key information or discuss next steps.	"Let me see if I'm hearing this correctly..." "Would it be okay if I share more information about...?" "Would it help to talk about next steps...?"

Small Group Practice

In groups of 3, practice applying the HEAR Technique. Select a scenario from the learner guide or create one of your own.

Discuss:

1. Select one person to play the clinician and one person to play the patient.
2. Use the microscripts your group developed to respond to the patient's question(s).
3. Remember your superpowers!



Debrief



Trainer reflection

- How can the trainer ensure that the experience is most impactful?
- How would you change this exercise to fit your context?



Thank you!

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HEAR Technique

