

Entanglements of COVID-19

Entanglements of COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy and Colonial Legacy in Russia's Peripheries

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Abstract

Given the quasi-colonial entanglements of Russia's peripheral republics, we ask whether and how their statuses influence local COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. Dagestan, in the North Caucasus, provides an interesting case study: vaccines were readily available and promoted by authorities, yet non-vaccination seemed to be the overwhelmingly popular and commonly accepted practice in the republic. We show that the quasi-colonial status of the republic added to vaccine hesitancy by evoking fears stemming from the colonial past and turbulent present. We conclude that, in studies on vaccination, nation-states should not be treated as uniform entities. Otherwise, researchers risk overlooking local factors behind vaccine hesitancy. We show that in some cultural contexts vaccine hesitancy may stem from a collective understanding of health and the prioritisation of local solidarities.

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