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Dear Editor: September 7, 2023

On behalf of my colleagues, I am pleased to submit to *Health Affairs* a manuscript entitled, “Evaluation of an equity-focused vaccine allocation policy on vaccination rates and COVID-19 outcomes in California, 2021” All authors have met the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) criteria for authorship and have approved the commentary for submission. No persons other than the authors listed have contributed significantly to its preparation.

The COVID-19 pandemic in California and across the world has disproportionately impacted disadvantaged populations, leading to inequities in health and other outcomes. To combat these inequities in the early phases of COVID-19 vaccination rollout, California allocated more vaccines to communities measuring lower on a place-based indicator of social vulnerability, the Healthy Places Index. Here, we evaluated the impact of this policy on COVID-19 vaccination rates and health outcomes including cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. We found that vaccination rates in the prioritized communities substantially increased after the policy was implemented. Furthermore, we found evidence that substantial COVID-19 outcomes among these communities were averted by the policy.

To our knowledge, this is the first analysis to rigorously evaluate an equity-focused vaccine allocation policy and its proximate effects on vaccinations as well as on COVID-19 health outcomes. The novelty of our findings is facilitated by our analytic approach to directly estimate counterfactual COVID-19 outcomes in the absence of the policy and compare these outcomes to observed counts of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. These findings have important policy implications for ongoing attempts to reduce health inequities caused by disparate infectious disease burdens suffered by disadvantaged populations. The analytic approach, findings, and implications fit well with the objectives of *Health Affairs*, and we believe they would be of interest to a broad audience including policy-makers, evaluators, and infectious diseases epidemiologists, health officers, and controllers.

The contents of this commentary are our original work and have not been published prior to our submission. There are no financial disclosures or conflicts of interest from any authors. We have listed a number of recommended reviewers suitable to assess the findings and methodology of the submitted manuscript below.

We greatly appreciate your time in reviewing this submission and considering our manuscript for publication. If any questions should arise regarding this submission or during the review process, please feel free to contact me at [cmhoove14@gmail.com](mailto:cmhoove14@gmail.com) or +1 (669) 899-7800, or any of the co-authors listed below.

Sincerely,



Christopher Hoover, PhD MPH

**Recommended Reviewers**

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Computational epidemiologist with expertise evaluating testing strategies to limit SARS-CoV2 transmission

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Epidemiologist with expertise in evaluation and implementation of strategies to control respiratory pathogens

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Infectious disease physician and epidemiologist with extensive policy and evaluation experience

**Daniel Ho ;** [dho@law.stanford.edu](mailto:dho@law.stanford.edu)

Director of policy-focused research group with experience in health-focused policy evaluation