  Okay. Um, I am Safia and I'm a student in at Rutgers University. And as you know, we are working on vaccine hesitancy in some remote areas around the world and in the U. S. we work in, um, Alaska. Can you please, um, introduce yourself and, uh, tell me more about your age, occupation, educational background, and how long have you lived in this city?

My name is Ashley. I'm 31. Um, I work in tech and I've gone to college. I live in Homer and I've lived here for 14 years. 14 years. Yeah. And, uh, you didn't get any vaccine, COVID vaccine, right? Right. Okay. Um, What's your idea about vaccines generally, not only COVID vaccine? For example, did you get other, other kinds of vaccines when you were a child or, uh, now, for example, other kinds of vaccines like HPV, flu or other vaccines?

Um, I, I don't have anything explicitly against vaccines. Mm hmm. More so, I I'm more trusting of the vaccines that have been around for a longer amount of time, so we have a more accurate representation of Mm hmm. their efficacy and any side effects and things like that. What about people around you? For example, your family, your friends, your colleagues, did they get, um, vaccines?

And, uh, did you see anybody around you that after getting the COVID vaccine, they had some side effects or more disease? I have known people that have had strange health anomalies that came up after receiving the COVID vaccine or additional boosters. Primarily more, um, more issues with their heart.

That's, that's

been the primary thing that I have seen. I see. So most of the people around you get vaccines or didn't get vaccine? I think it's probably about even because for a good portion of them, you know, if they didn't have the option to not get it, if they wanted to stay employed. And, uh, did they want to want, like, um, persuade you to get vaccine or encourage you or, for example, sending you information or anything to encourage you to get vaccine?

Um, I, I have some acquaintances that are medical doctors. Mm hmm. And. Um, they were of course, open-minded to the science of it all, and they were encouraging, but respectful of it being an individual decision. But it was a good place to be able to discuss the hesitancy. Mm-Hmm. . Okay. Um, when we look at data, uh, we can see that, um, for the, uh, first effects of vaccines.

People in Alaska get like around, I mean, uh, around 60 percent of people get the first vaccine. But when we go for the boosters, this percentage came down to less than 20%. What do you think about it? Why people didn't get boosters, um, again, and what, what was the reasons? Except your reason. I'm, I'm just looking for.

Some reason from the people. I want to know. I want to hear what people think about it. Yeah, I think the general consensus was that it wasn't, um, maybe that I think the best way word is like that it wasn't necessary. And it was kind of, you know, it became overkill with Booster 1, so on. So a lot of people were.

Were content with the fact that they had the original vaccine and didn't see data aligning with the need for more.

And did you see any, like, NGOs, any kind of non governmental organizations, or, you know, individuals who encourage people to get vaccine or give them some information or even discourage them. Did you see any like non governmental organizations to do that? Yeah, there was a lot of encouragement from NGOs.

Not so much about not getting it, but more for advocating to get. Mm hmm. How, how they do, how they did it? Um, For example, they came to you, talked to you in person, or sending you, uh, materials in social media, or sending you emails, or inviting you, for example, to talk to each other. How they did it? There was a lot of mailed media, and then social media was pretty covered in it.

Mm hmm. And, um,

yeah, I think that's, that's probably the primary. Mm hmm. Okay. And as you know, in, um, some countries in the world, um, COVID vaccine was obligatory, but not, not in the U. S. actually. Uh, how do you think about it? Do you think, um, I mean, putting, uh, application and, um, something like COVID vaccine is a good strategy?

How do you think about it? No, I think that it is a broad overreach because everybody should have a right to their own decision of what happens with their own body. Yeah, sure. And, uh, um, what's your idea about, um, healthcare system in Alaska? Is it affordable for you and most of the people? Is it accessible?

No, not. I heard a lot that it is absolutely expensive. and not accessible. Okay. Do you think, do you think this problem affects your idea about vaccine? No. So, um, for example, if you have a, if you are a like a decision maker in healthcare system in Alaska and you have a budget to put somewhere, which one do you prefer to put this budget on?

The first one is, um, building more infrastructures, I mean, for example, building hospitals or bringing more specialists to Alaska, or, um, putting it in some community based activities like, like trustmaking activities and social based activities. Which one do you think is more needed in Alaska for public health?

Um, the second one. Mm hmm. So, you, you think that some more social activities or community based activities is needed for Alaska. Yeah. Okay. And, um, do you think, uh, people totally not, not only yourself, totally, generally people in Alaska need more, some scientific information about the vaccines, or even they can be persuaded by some more emotional aspects.

For example, uh, like community leader, uh, tribe leader, or a religious leader can come to them, talk to them and persuade them to get vaccine. Or no, Alaska doesn't work like that. Sure. So you need, Alaskan people need more scientific information. For example, if, uh, um, some For example, universities publish some paper for that or publish some information, it will be more, it will be better for them, right?

Right. I think if it was provided in a way that, you know, the organizing structure trusts individuals to educate themselves and make the correct decision would be better received than, um, being guilted into it or being, like, force fed the information. Because Alaskans, I think, are very independent thinkers and stuck in their ways.

So if they're going to change their mind, it's going to come from them. Mm hmm. Okay. And, um, what do you think could be done to improve the quality of vaccine related information? Especially in social media because, you know, uh, we had lots of misinformation and sometimes even crazy information in social media about the vaccines.

Um, how, what did you expect to see, to hear? For example, could you could tell yourself that, yeah, that's logical. Um, how, how did you like to hear this, uh, information and what did you expect to see? In social media, I think that it would've been better received if there was more transparency. Mm-Hmm and less of you have to do this.

Everybody needs you to do this. And like alluding to like, you're not a good or smart person if you don't do this. And so if it was presented in a way that acknowledged the risk. openly and walked people through the process of the risk and reward in a more honest manner. I feel like it would have been more effective.

Great. And, um, what about other people? For example, you may have lots of friends or, um, family or family that they go through to universities. They, um, I mean, now they are like citizen scientists. How do you think about their role? Do you think they need to come back to their communities, to their people, talk to them, give them more information?

Or do you think it won't work too? I think that that would be valuable. The biggest way to get the best message across to individual people is with the connection. So if they feel like it's, they're connected to an individual who has the knowledge and they can trust that individual without the individual being completely biased.

I think that that's a good, that would be good. Okay. And, uh, what strategy or policy do you think, uh, the local government or public health system Um, decision makers in Alaska take to improve the, um, vaccines related, um, information or, um, any kind of vaccine related, um, in, I mean, improving the quality of, um, vaccine related issues, anything information and accessibility or anything.

Yeah, I think that. From my perspective, that's always going to come back to the honest and open, transparent dialogue, whether it's between people or just provided as a whole. I think the more open and transparent everything is, the more likely it is going to be well received. Do you think, um, some financial incentives?

would work for Alaskan people to get vaccine?

For some it might, for others they stand pretty strong in their convictions.

Okay, for, so you think for some people they may, it may work? Yeah, but I, I have a moral conflict with that because that's going to appeal to people in poverty or in need of financials, help, and So that's a, that's not a great aspect to consider for me anyway. I see. Thank you so much for your time. And is there anything, any experience during COVID or anything else you want to add to our conversation?

No, not that I can think of. Thank you very much for your time and have a good day. Thank you. You too. You too. Bye.