A Black Scientist Helped Develop Moderna's COVID-19 Vaccine

Kizzmekia Corbett, PhD, is a lead researcher on the team responsible for developing the Moderna vaccine, Anthony Fauci, MD, confirms.

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Despite being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, many African Americans still don't want to take a COVID-19 vaccine, which is why Anthony Fauci, MD, wants the Black community to know that a Black woman helped develop the Moderna vaccine that received emergency use authorization on Friday, CNN reports.

Many African Americans harbor a deep mistrust of the government and the medical system because of a string of historical offenses against this group, including the well-known Tuskegee syphilis study.

"So the first thing you might want to say to my African-American brothers and sisters is that the vaccine that you're going to be taking was developed by an African American," said Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, during a recent event hosted by the National Urban League. "And that is just a fact."

Kizzmekia "Kizzy" Corbett, PhD, is one of the National Institute of Health's lead scientists behind the Moderna vaccine, which was reported to have 94% efficacy against symptomatic COVID-19 and almost 100% efficacy against serious disease, Fauci noted. He also said that the vaccine's safety was confirmed.

Corbett said those who are vaccine-hesitant have the right to ask questions about the vaccines and their development process.

Her goal is to earn the trust of Black Americans, she told CNN's Sanjay Gupta, MD, during an episode of the podcast Coronavirus: Fact vs Fiction. However, this will take time, and that is something health experts will have to learn to accept, she stressed.

"Trust, especially when it has been stripped from people, has to be rebuilt in a brick-by-brick fashion," said Corbett. "And so what I say to people firstly is that I empathize and then secondly is that I'm going to do my part in laying those bricks."

Other doctors and scientists must also do the same, Corbett added.

For related coverage, read “Black Doctors Create a COVID-19 Vaccine Assessment Task Force” and “Former Presidents Plan to Publicly Get the COVID-19 Vaccine.”

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