



# COVID-19 vaccination uptake among health care workers (HCW) requesting medical exemptions to vaccination.

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## Background

- New York State adopted a COVID-19 vaccination requirement for all healthcare workers in September 2021. The state permits medical exemptions to vaccination. We examined reasons and frequency of medical exemptions in a large academic center.

## Objectives

- To understand how common medical exemptions are among HCP
- To describe reasons for medical contraindications cited by the medical providers

## Methods

- Design: Active surveillance of all medical exemption requests since mandatory COVID-19 vaccination came into effect in NY in September 2021.
- Setting: A large tertiary care academic center
- Data collection: Information about the individual's age, gender, reason for request, prior acceptance of other required vaccines, provider support letter, determination, and impact of decision on COVID-19 vaccine acceptance were collected prospectively since the mandate became effective.
- Data Analysis:
  - Frequencies and percentages of employment characteristics, reason for vaccination exemption request, exemption determination and vaccination status for other vaccines were described across type of exemption categories and statistically compared with chi-square statistics.

## Results

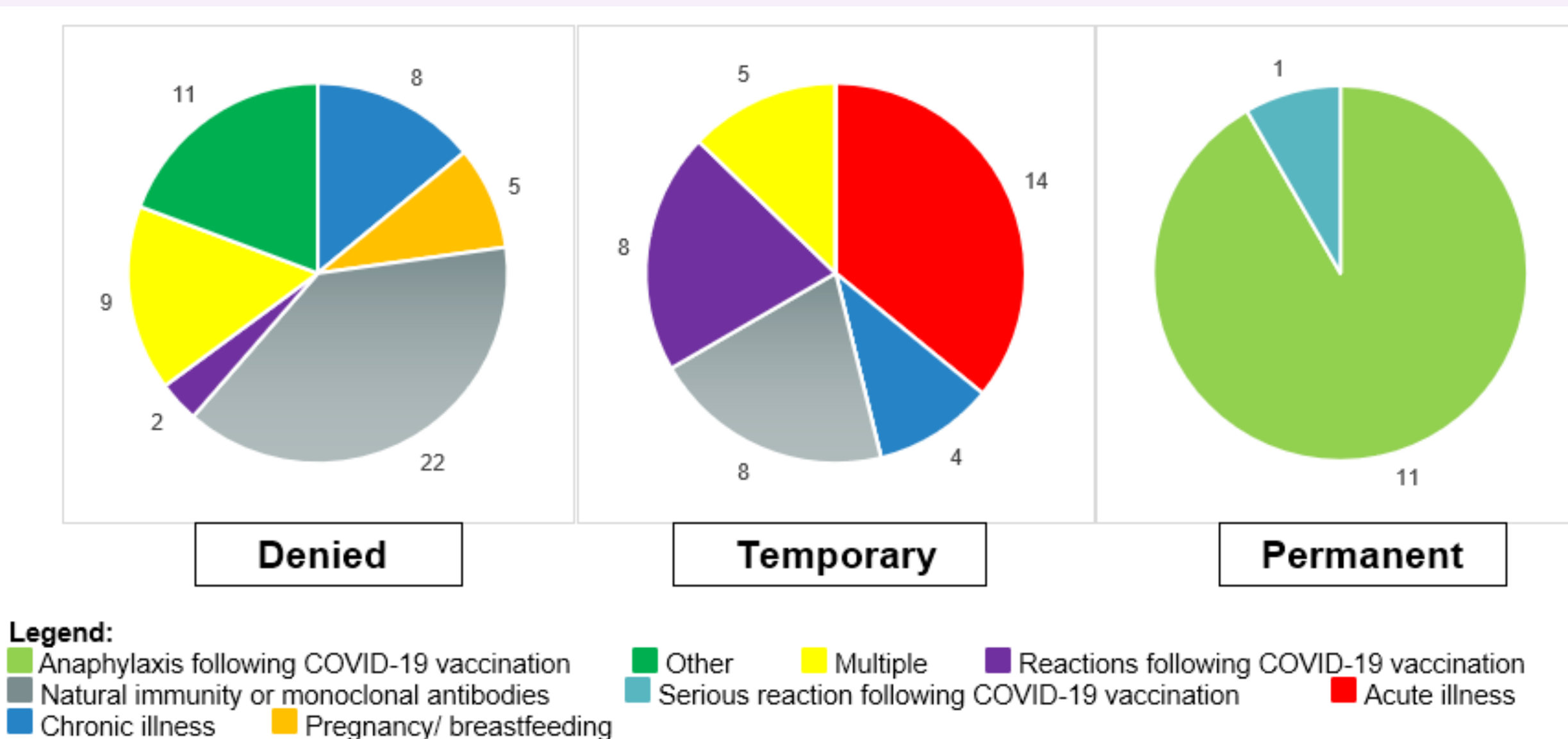
- Among 8,776 HCWs, 108 (1.2%) requested medical exemption of those 92 (85%) were females and 16 (15%) were males, respectively.
- Majority, 94 (87%) of the HCWs had a letter from their provider in support of the exemption. Nevertheless, only 48 (51%) of those qualified for permanent or temporary exemption using CDC guidance, table.
- Most common reasons for denying exemptions included: having natural immunity, monoclonal antibodies, a common reaction to vaccination, and underlying medical condition, figure 1.
- Some of those whose request was denied or was temporary were subsequently vaccinated, 23 (40%) and 8 (21%), respectively, figure 2.

## Results (cont.)

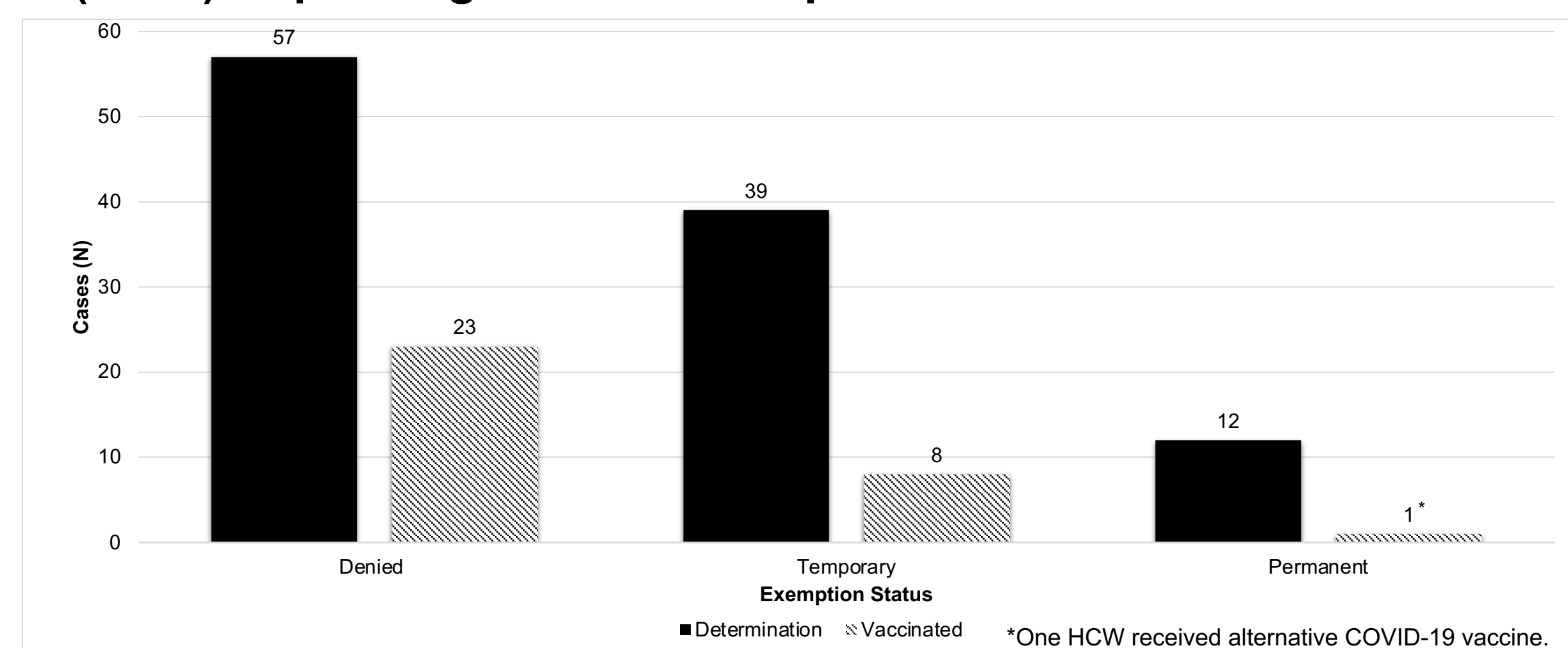
**Table: Demographic and other characteristics among health care workers (HCW) requesting medical exemptions.**

Determination	Female N (%)	Age Median (Y)	Provider Letter N (%)	Length of Employment Median (years)	Received Tdap N (%)	Received Flu N (%)
Denied (N=57)	48 (84)	38	46 (81)	5	39 (68)	44 (77)
Temporary (N=39)	33 (85)	38	36 (92)	6.5	30 (77)	37 (95)
Permanent (N=12)	11 (92)	45	12(100)	4	8 (67)	11 (92)

**Figure 1: Reasons for requesting medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination.**



**Figure 2: COVID-19 vaccine uptake among health care workers (HCW) requesting medical exemptions to COVID-19 vaccination.**



## Conclusions

- Females were more likely to claim medical exemptions to vaccination and their requests were often supported by their providers.
- Majority of HCWs provided documentation from his or her health care provider (HCP). However, in most cases, reasons cited by the HCP did not represent true medical contraindication to COVID-19 vaccination.
- Majority of HCWs received other recommended vaccines (i.e. Tdap, influenza), in the past. The vaccination acceptance differed by determination type and vaccine, and ranged between 67% to 95%, table.

## Next steps

- Future efforts should focus on health care provider and public education about valid reasons for medical contraindications or precautions to vaccination to reduce misuse of medical exemptions.

## References

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