Implementation of a Community-Based Participatory Research Training to Address Obesity

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Background: Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is an important component in the process of implementing evidence-based research into practice. The CBPR process can facilitate true community participation and foster academic and community partnerships. Researchers engage in a co-learning process with the community rather than imposing a research protocol on them. This poster presentation reports on the adaptation, implementation, and evaluation of a CBPR training to build the capacity of Native American communities to conduct research addressing obesity. While Native American communities experience significant diet-related health disparities, few culturally appropriate and community-based participatory programs addressing obesity exist within Native communities. This poster reports on a partnership between three Native American communities in Northern California, two local Indian health clinics, and the University of California, Davis, to adapt and implement a CBPR curriculum to facilitate the development of community-directed obesity prevention programs.

Methods: The Developing and Sustaining Community-based Participatory Research Partnerships: A Skill-Building Curriculum, created by the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health was adapted for implementation in three tribal communities in Northern California. The CBPR training was implemented over the course of two years and included interactive and participatory educational sessions. A participatory evaluation component was added to the curriculum, with the community members assessing the efficacy of the training and the community-clinic-academic partnership in building community capacity to conduct research. Both qualitative and quantitative evaluation measures were assessed. To collect qualitative data, the community created a focus group guide, with questions developed through a participatory process, and implemented in three focus group sessions. To collect quantitative data, a survey created by the Native American Research Center’s for Health (NARCH) study was implemented. Both the qualitative and quantitative data measured the community members’ satisfaction in building positive, trusting, and sustainable relationships with partners and the impact of the project.

Results: Focus groups identified three themes that highlight the training experience: 1) Native communities want a voice in research; 2) the CBPR training gave community members’ confidence; and 3) the CBPR training showed community members the importance of telling their community’s stories. Surveys revealed that both research infrastructure and capacity were built. These tribal communities are now in the process of creating obesity-focused interventions that are guided by the CBPR principles.

Conclusion: Community-based participatory research (CBPR) shows promise in translating evidence-based research into practice and creating community-directed obesity interventions. The CBPR curriculum built community capacity and infrastructure to create culturally relevant and community-driven interventions.