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Connecting Community to Research: A Training Program to Increase Community Partnerships in Research

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Background
- Community Engaged Research (CEnR) emphasizes the need for community members to partner with researchers in order to address health disparities.
- We created the Connecting Community to Research (CCR) training program to provide opportunities for community members who reflect our diverse population to learn more about partnering in CEnR.

Purpose
- To increase the number and diversity of community members who are informed about, ready and willing to engage in the research process.

Training Development
- From July to December 2015, we partnered with a 12-member Advisory Board of community engagement professionals to design a training to introduce community members to CEnR.
- The CCR training was adapted from existing Tufts University CTSI curriculum, Harvard Catalyst curriculum, and a CDC storytelling template.
- Loco-regional projects were identified and presented to trainees as opportunities to engage with researchers after trainings.

Training Program
- Original Goals:
  - 6 trainings over 9 months
  - Various community settings
  - At least 60 community members trained
- Training sessions:
  - 1-2 hours
  - Didactic and interactive components
  - Group size from 3-65 trainees
  - Designed for trainees with little to no prior knowledge of research

Evaluation
- 94% understood how research could address a community concern
- 82% understood how to use their stories to inform research
- 53% intended to participate as an advocate in research

Participants
- N=100 with 7 trainings
- Figure 1: Race of Participants
- Figure 2: Age Range of Participants by Gender (N=82)

Outcomes
- 2 trainees joined Institutional Review Board
- 2 became advisors on Patient Advisory Groups
- 2 became proposal reviewers
- 39 trainees signed up to receive quarterly newsletter

Opportunities
- 53% intended to participate as an advocate in research
- 60-90
effectively influence research

Lessons Learned
- Training curriculum must be flexible to adapt to:
  - the size and research experience of group
  - accessibility to technology
  - time constraints
- Ample time should be devoted to Storytelling to allow participants to both work through and share their stories.
- A quarterly newsletter functioned as an important way to keep all trainees informed of current opportunities to partner with researchers.
- A one-time training does not cultivate lasting partnerships between community members and researchers which takes time to establish.

Conclusion
- This introductory level awareness training generated positive results.
- The results demonstrate that additional trainings, with varying levels of skill development, may be needed to further empower community members to engage as partners in research.

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