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

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Pamphile, Jennifer; Bak, Sharon; Spencer, Nikki; Han, Ann; and Battaglia, Tracy A., "Connecting Community to Research: A Training Program to Increase Community Partnerships in Research" (2017). *Community Engagement and Research Symposia*. 10.  
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Keywords
Community Engaged Research, training, community groups

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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

TRAINING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Objective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocate vs. Researcher</td>
<td>Explain the roles of advocates and researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Research and Why Do We Do It?</td>
<td>Overview of the Scientific Method and Community Engaged Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Convey how storytelling can effectively influence research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Provide regional opportunities to participate as a research advocate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants

Figure 1: Race of Participants

- White 56%
- African American 36%
- Other 5%
- Asian 3%

Figure 2: Age Range of Participants by Gender (N=82)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>18-39</th>
<th>40-59</th>
<th>60-90</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluations

- 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

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

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 experiences.
- 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.

Acknowledgments

Our 12-member Advisory Board
Boston University CTSI
Tufts University CTSI
Harvard Catalyst CTSI
UMass CCTS

Funding

Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute
Eugene Washington Engagement Award contract# 1195-BMC
Boston University CTSI Community Engagement
NIH/NCATS 1UL1TR001430