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Evaluating the Efficacy of Training Programs for Community Health Workers in Rural Uganda

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Abstract

Background: The Ministry of Health and Omnimed, a non-profit U.S.-based organization that works with international communities to provide basic health education, have partnered to provide health training to community health workers (VHWs) in several villages in Uganda. The training is provided via an intensive five-day long session that introduces a wide variety of themes in basic health education taught by experts in the respective fields. The participants are selected by the local government based on their age, reliability, level of education and availability. On the first day, the participants are given a pre-test that evaluates their level of knowledge about the subjects that will be taught during the training sessions, and are given the same questions in a post-test on the last day of training. This is done to evaluate how much information the participants learned about basic health during the training. The participants are followed after this training by quarterly meetings, focus groups and further, specific training sessions. We analyzed data from the pre- and post-tests to evaluate the amount of information learned through the training sessions and also evaluated feedback from the focus groups to determine how numerous thought the program was affecting their community and to analyze the challenges facing the VHWs.

Objectives: The objective of this project was two-fold: 1) to evaluate the amount of information about basic health retained by VHWs who participated in a week-long training session; and 2) to follow-up with VHWs to see what changes they noticed in their communities and determine what challenges they face in disseminating health information in their villages.

Methods: The study sample consisted of 110 participants who were asked to complete the pre- and post-tests. The post- and post-training test consisted of 49 multiple choice questions, written in Luganda, with a total possible score of 105. The pre-test was distributed to the participants on the first day of the training session. Participants were administered pre-tests on the last day of the training session. The questions and the delivery of the exams were the same at both points in time. The scoring of the test was as follows: each correct answer earned one point, incorrect answers received no points, and questions with more than one answer accepted no points. We compared the percentage of correct answers of the pre- and post-tests to determine any changes in knowledge as a result of the training sessions. A total of 99 VHWs were recruited to participate in focus groups. Focus groups were conducted three and six months after the original training session and involved free to test VHWs per session. Questionnaires were distributed to the groups and questions were read aloud with discussion about each topic. We asked the VHWs: 1) Have you noticed healthy changes in your community?; 2) What changes have you noticed; and 3) How does the community view you as a VHT?; 4) What support could you use as a VHW?

Results: The VHWs selected from the communities were aged 25-40, were more likely to be female than male, and generally had a non-health related occupation. One hundred and two participants completed both the pre- and post-tests. The average difference between test scores at the two points in time was an improvement of 20.25 points, or 19.3%. The range of differences between the scores was -5 to 61. Given that the VHWs were not previously educated about basic health, this was viewed as a marginal improvement. However, data from the focus groups indicates that the VHWs were noticing changes in their community. The participants in the focus groups were asked two goals at the beginning and 45 at the end of the training, which were to educate their community imbues in them a responsibility to spread the information in their villages.

Conclusion: The increased mean score of the post-tests indicates that the VHWs did learn basic health information during the training session. However, the improvement in score was not as notable as one would expect given the intensive nature of the training and the baseline level of knowledge being somewhat low. The data from the focus groups, however, indicated that VHWs are creating positive change in their communities. This could mean that the simple act of appointing one person to educate their community imbues in them a responsibility to spread the knowledge that they have learned, however basic it may be. It could also indicate that the VHWs learned more at the training sessions than the test scores reveal. This shows the importance of adding emphasis on practice-oriented goals for VHW training. The VHWs learned more about how to educate their communities than they did about the actual content of the training sessions. The VHWs learned more at the training sessions than the test scores reveal. This shows the importance of adding emphasis on practice-oriented goals for VHW training. The VHWs learned more about how to educate their communities than they did about the actual content of the training sessions. The VHWs learned more at the training sessions than the test scores reveal. This shows the importance of adding emphasis on practice-oriented goals for VHW training. The VHWs learned more about how to educate their communities than they did about the actual content of the training sessions.

Survey Questions

What Support do VHWs Need?

Surveys that ask the villagers about changes they have or have not made and if they have seen any improvement in their health. This information will provide further evidence as to whether VHWs are an ideal model in the field of health education.

Survey Results

Participants who took both pre- and post-tests:

Average improvement in score between the pre- and post-tests:

The range of differences between the pre-tests:

Changes VHWs Reported in Their Communities

How Does Community View You as a VHT?

Participants who took both pre- and post-tests:

Average improvement in score between the pre- and post-tests:

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