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Stakeholder Engagement through Participatory Action Research at iSPARC

Amanda Costa
University of Massachusetts Medical School

Melissa L. Anderson
University of Massachusetts Medical School

Deirdre G. Logan
University of Massachusetts Medical School

See next page for additional authors

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Amanda Costa, Melissa L. Anderson, Deirdre G. Logan, and Celine Larkin

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Stakeholder Engagement through Participatory Action Research at iSPARC

Amanda Costa, Melissa Anderson, Deirdre Logan, Celine Larkin
University of Massachusetts Medical School

Established in 2018, the Implementation Science & Practice Advances Research Center (iSPARC) is a new Massachusetts DMH-funded collaborative effort between the former UMMS Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center, UMMS Population & Quantitative Health Sciences and Boston University’s Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. With 52 core and affiliate investigators, iSPARC features four interacting programs: Stakeholder Engagement, Public Mental Health and Implementation Research, Technical Assistance and External Funding, and Workforce Development.

The mission of the Stakeholder Engagement Program is to lead the mental health research community and beyond in working in partnership with individuals with lived mental health experience, their families, and the agencies that serve them. This program intersects with several of iSPARC’s activities. It includes three active advisory groups with more than 20 members representing youth & young adults with lived mental health experience, older adults with lived mental health experience, and family members. These advisory groups adopt a participatory action research (PAR) approach and seek to engage community stakeholders at every stage of research, from development through enrollment and dissemination.

The iSPARC Stakeholder Engagement Program seeks to increase engagement and diversity through several initiatives:

- Development of a community provider advisory board
- Annual assessment of diversity representation on advisory boards
- Annual assessment of participation action research across all iSPARC projects
- Ongoing dissemination of products to assist other organizations in initiating and maintaining stakeholder engagement

2018 results (n=14)

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<td>Race?</td>
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<td>Language?</td>
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<td>Disability?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lived experience of mental health?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
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Measuring and improving participatory approaches in existing studies using a structured tool

Conducting an annual diversity survey of our existing advisory groups

Celine.larkin@umassmed.edu