FQHC Oral Health Research Network: Case Study of the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic

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Research & FQHCs

- Traditionally, research conducted by government agencies, universities or other large institutions.
  - FQHCs may participate but generally are NOT key players in developmental and planning process, or research topics

- Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) model
  
  Growing attention and interest, model’s focus:
  - Equitable partnerships
  - Sharing power and resources
  - Reciprocal appreciation of the knowledge
  - Invest in community capacity building
Do Current Research Networks Satisfy the Promises of CBPR?

Dental
- Recently NIDCR funded - Private Practice-Based Research Network

Medical
- Primary Care Practice-Based Research Networks (AHQR funded)
- Pediatric Research in Office Settings (PROS) network
- Cooperative Research Network (COOP), Dartmouth College
- Practice Partner Research Network (PPRNet), U. South Carolina
- Kentucky Ambulatory Research Network
- Pediatric Eye Disease Investigator Group (PEDIG)

Non-Profit
- Institute for Community Research (ICR) (Hartford, CT)
- Community Based Collaborative Research Consortium (CBCRC)
Traditional Research Networks

- Research initiations, goals, interests, topics and designs prioritized by agencies or institutions, NOT by communities or local health centers’ staff.

- Focus on deficits & needs NOT on strengths & assets—captures negative aspects of community

- Focus on outcomes NOT root causes

- Stereotyped values and bias, generally negative views

- Outcome data misinterpretation creating more stigmatization for community
Need for FQHC Research Network

- Practice-Based Research Networks have own agendas and commonly follow traditional research models.
- Community-University Partnership Networks are learning to work with communities but weight still towards university’s agenda & interest.
- Current researchers do not utilize community experts and members to best understand and serve the community via research.
- Researchers lack cultural competency and in-depth understanding of health issues of underserved communities.
- Researchers lack the community’s perception of its health and needs.
Need for FQHC Research Network

- Will acknowledge power and expertise of the community and FQHCs serving the community
- Will focus research to address their needs and strengths
- Will invest in the local community and improve capacity
- Will utilize FQHCs and communities to disseminate findings & translate findings to useful programs improving health
The Key Players in a FQHCs Research Network

Clinics or Centers
- Board of Directors, Executive Director, Executive Committee, Administrators, Clinicians, Staffs

Communities
- Leaders/representatives, outreach workers, clinic employees, community orgs/groups, general public

Institutions
- Institution, Universities, Researchers
- Funding Agencies, Grantors
Getting FQHCs Started in Research

- Promote dialog & interest in evaluation & research useful to FQHCs
  - specific or general interest, introduction to research steps

- Provide in-service on CBPR approach, Research Ethics, Basic Evaluation & Research Methodologies and Significance

- Assist in development of a Research Review Committee (made up of clinicians, non-clinicians, and community members)

- Assist in development of a Community Advisory Committee

- Assist in review & evaluation of FQHCs annual needs assessment for potential research topics, ideas

- Promote FQHCs to pro-actively seek collaborators with similar interests or needs to conduct research addressing concerns

- Allow opportunity to hear from community members about their health priorities
Challenges of Starting FQHCs Research Network

- FQHCs, Clinician, Community buy-in
  - Usually buy-in starts with clinician
  - Engage in clinician’s interest and experience
  - Clinician recommend to Board of Director & Executive Committee
  - Establish Community Advisory Board

- FQHCs manpower, time, & resources
  - Determine & establish mechanism for equitable and appropriate funding to reimburse manpower & resources
  - Determine feasibility of research funding to hiring additional staff for research project

- FQHCs commitment & responsibility to Network
  - Establish Steering Committee and organizational structure
  - Establish clear guideline for responsibility & involvement
  - Participation in research project is voluntary based on clinic’s interest in the topic.
Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinics

- Initial involvement with research --> Researchers directed
- Through experience, asserted an equal position with Researchers
- Gained interest in research addressing needs of communities.
- Developed Research Review Subcommittee (made of clinics directors and non-clinical members) which is also in charge of HIPAA Privacy Board
- Developed time-limited Community Advisory Committee for specific program or research
- Reviews clinics’ needs assessment and community challenges for potential research topics
- Pro-actively seeks institutional collaborators with similar interests and expertise to jointly develop & conduct research (Co-PI grants)
- YVFWC and collaborators must abide to the Principles of Community-Based Research (University of Washington Model)
Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinics
- Process for Accepting Outside Research -

- Research project proposed from outside the organization must have a “Clinic Sponsor”

- Clinic Sponsor serves as primary internal contact for the researcher

- Divisions involved with propose research provide input to Research Review Subcommittee

- Research Review Subcommittee determines applicability and interest in the research

- Once project is approved – Clinic Sponsor takes responsibility for making sure the researcher complies with YVFWC policies and procedures, and any conditions put on the project.

- Must have report back and allow for feedback prior to publication
First Steps in Forming Research Network

- Identify clinic clinicians with some interest in research
- Suggest, build and establish interest in evaluation & research of interest to clinicians to improve community health at FQHC
- Forming Steering Committee with equitable representation of researchers, FQHC, and community members
- Defining the Purposes/Goals of Network and structure
- Assess Strengths and Weaknesses in terms of Community Capacities and Disease Burden, Similarities & Uniqueness among FQHCs
- Prioritize agenda for Exploration, Research, and Program Development
- Identify Funders/Grantors & University/Agency Collaborators
- Develop Strategies to Develop & Design Research Projects to answer specific questions of interest to FQHCs
Key to Successful Researcher-Community Partnerships

- Trusting relationships
- Equitable processes and procedures
- Diverse membership
- Tangible benefits to all partners
- Balance between partnership process, activities, outcomes
- Significant community involvement in scientifically sound research
- Supportive partner organization policies and reward structures
- Leadership
- Culturally competent and appropriately skilled staff and researchers
- Collaborative dissemination
- Ongoing partnership assessment, improvement and celebration
- Sustainable impact
Benefits a FQHCs Research Network Can Provide to FQHCs

- Improve health & services through research collaborations with other FQHCs in addition to research intensive institutions
- Balance of Power between FQHCs and Institutions
- Enhanced ability to successfully carry out research projects of interest to FQHCs and the community
- Address health disparities through research at the local level
- Utilization of expertise and resources from Institutions
- Develop own expertise in research over time
The Center is supported, in part, by a cooperative agreement with the NIDCR/NIH