Mapping a Strategic Plan for Health: Community-Based Participatory Research with Underserved, Low-Income, Urban Neighborhoods

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Since 2002, community-based participatory research methods have been used by the Calvin College Nursing Department to map out a strategic health plan for three urban, low-income, underserved neighborhoods. Community-based participatory research is a collaborative approach to inquiry, in which community and academia are co-teachers and co-learners (Anderson, Calvillo, & Fongwa, 2007; Heffner, Zandee, & Schwander, 2003). It emphasizes shared power, building community capacity, and joint research with the goal of action, to improve the health of the community (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). Nine focus groups and 449 door-to-door health surveys were completed across the three urban neighborhoods between 2002 and 2004.

Neighborhood meetings were held to share the results of the research, and to give residents a platform to identify the top five health concerns for their neighborhood along with recommended solutions. Neighborhood strategic plans were then collaboratively written documenting the baseline research, and linking the resident-driven health concerns and solutions with nursing student learning experiences across the nursing curriculum. The top health concern identified by all three neighborhoods was lack of access to health care. The resident-driven solution addressing this issue was development of a Community Health Worker Program. Residents would be trained in basic health care and would work with nursing students to promote health and access to care in the neighborhood. The Community Health Worker Program was identified on the strategic plan as a strategy to promote access to care, and was initiated in the three neighborhoods in 2005. Evaluation measures were outlined in the strategic plan to measure effectiveness of the collaborative program.

Between 2009 and 2011, students and Community Health Worker Program members collaborated to complete the same research process of focus groups and door-to-door surveys as
initiated in 2002. Neighborhood meetings were conducted to disseminate the research results, review the top five health concerns, recommend solutions, and update the strategic plan. Results showed that emergency room use and barriers to health care decreased in the three neighborhoods between 2004 and 2011; access to dental care increased. Combining community-based participatory research with written strategic plans was found to be a useful strategy to unite community members, nursing students and faculty members, and neighborhood organizations in a long-term partnership addressing resident-driven health concerns and solutions in urban underserved neighborhoods while educating nursing students.

References


About the Author

Gail Zandee is the community partnership coordinator and assistant professor of nursing at Calvin College. Her research interests include health promotion, health disparities, social determinants of health, access to health care, and community health workers. Zandee earned her BSN from Calvin College and her MSN from Wayne State University.
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Introduction

In 2002, the Calvin College Nursing Department initiated a community-based nursing curriculum. In 2009, the Calvin Whitaker (WRAC) and the Calvin Whitaker Institute for Community Health (CWIN) initiated a collaborative research program for community-based participatory research (CBPR) with community members, community leaders, and co-workers. This CBPR approach was developed to enhance the community’s ability to address health concerns and improve health outcomes. The Collaborative Research Program (CRP) is a partnership between the university and community organizations. The CRP aims to improve health outcomes by addressing health disparities and social determinants of health.

Background

CBPR is a collaborative research approach that involves community members, community leaders, and university researchers. This approach encourages community participation in all stages of the research process. The CBPR approach is designed to address the needs of the community and to improve health outcomes. It is important to note that CBPR is not a one-time event. CBPR is an ongoing process that involves community members, community leaders, and university researchers working together to address health concerns and improve health outcomes.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are conducted by the Calvin Whitaker Institute for Community Health (CWIN) and the Calvin Whitaker Institute for Community Health (WRAC) to identify local health needs and priorities. Focus groups are used to gather information from community members and community leaders. The focus groups are based on the community’s needs and priorities. The focus groups are conducted in a community setting and are led by community members and community leaders.

Neighborhood Survey

A neighborhood survey is conducted by the Calvin Whitaker Institute for Community Health (CWIN) and the Calvin Whitaker Institute for Community Health (WRAC) to identify local health needs and priorities. The neighborhood survey is used to gather information from community members and community leaders. The survey is conducted in a community setting and is led by community members and community leaders.