Reducing Digital & Health Inequities in Latina Immigrant Communities: A Community-Based Participatory Research

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ROUNDTABLE ON THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH EQUITY AND THE ELIMINATION OF HEALTH DISPARITIES

Digital Health Strategies, Health Disparities, and Health Equity: The Promises and Perils of Technology
A Public Workshop

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Community Partners

La Comunidad Habla
«The Community Speaks»

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Goal

• To describe a community-academic collaboration to reduce the “double divide” in a Latina immigrant community
• To highlight the particular context & details of this collaboration
• To propose a model for similar collaborations in different community settings
Local Context: New Mexico (NM)

- Minority-majority state.
- Latinos comprise 47% of the population.
- Cultural, historical, and natural richness.
- One of the highest national poverty rates.
- Myriad inequalities, including health disparities.
- Lowest rate of broadband Internet access at home
Local Context: Southeast Albuquerque

• Local activists passed resolution to name the area “the International District,” in recognition of the diversity of its residents & to replace stigmatic perceptions.

• The area is the most ethnically diverse in the state.

• It is a portal for newly arrived immigrants, as housing is more affordable & it is centrally located.

• Rental properties - up to 80%.
The Digital Divide

• The digital divide in the U.S. persists despite increase in online access.

• Latinos are digitally-marginalized in access to information technologies (IT), lower representation in IT workforce, & lack of culturally diverse content on the Web.

• Digital divide has marginalizing social and economical effects.

• Health information on the Internet is important to individuals’ decision making and well being.
Bridging the Digital Divide

• Providing physical online access to digitally marginalized communities is necessary but insufficient.
• Culturally-appropriate interventions are needed to meet the information needs of these communities.
• Interventions should provide support and culturally appropriate, low literacy level content.
La Comunidad Habla (LCH)

- A community digital media group
- Created in 2002 as a community outreach of Young Children’s Health Center, a UNM pediatric clinic in the Southeast heights.
- Founded to provide women with technological and health advocacy leadership in the community
La Comunidad Habla (Cont.)

• Began as evening computer classes in Spanish for women; included childcare on site
• Created bilingual, on-line healthcare resource directory (www.mycommunitynm.org)
• Provided opportunities for community members to access health information & technology
• Reached & trained over 1,000 community members & providers
La Comunidad Habla’s Model

• Relied almost exclusively on their own work, in content creation & technical expertise
• Provided small groups teaching and support
• Collaborated with other community organizations
Educational Comics
Community-Academic Collaboration

Solicited community-identified content area

- What information do community members seek when they are provided with online access?
- Community leaders identified behavioral health of children as an area of concern
- Review of the literature was conducted to support the need & inform the collaboration
Early Childhood Mental Health Disparities

- Most U.S. children who need evaluation and treatment for behavioral health & developmental disorders do not receive services.
- Extreme unmet needs among Latino/a preschool-age children.
- Children are diagnosed after they enter the school system.
- Interventions are often most effective in younger children.
Previous Research (Cont.)

• Help seeking/parental service-utilization is related to knowledge & perceptions of stigma.
• Although communication can influence help-seeking, there are no known communication interventions to increase knowledge & reduce stigmatic perceptions.
• The role of information seeking, avoiding and sharing in help seeking is unknown.
Multidisciplinary Collaborations & Funding

- Initiated collaborations with mental health providers
- La Tierra Sagrada ($20,000); supported focus groups in English.
- DHHS/NIH/NCRR grant from the University of New Mexico, Clinical and Translational Science Center (CTSC) ($43,000); Provided support for community partners as researchers.
Research Aims

1. To examine low-income Latina community members’ information needs & information sources regarding early childhood behavior & development

2. To develop educational outreach to community members & key stakeholders
Methods

• Focus Groups in Spanish & English
• Community presentations with mental health professionals
• Creation of educational materials, including an education-entertainment illustrated story (historieta).
Future Research Goals

• Create an intervention to meet parental information needs & decrease the digital divide.
• Include training in using the Internet, workshops in the community, and test effects of print/digital materials such as historietas.
• Build additional collaborations with healthcare providers in the community.
• Working with day care centers in the community to reach parents and caretakers.
Challenges

- Lack of continuous funding
- Local “heroes” move on, models change
- Technology changes
- Community leaders continue to face barriers, including digital access
- Academic processes & contributions are often inconsistent with community practice
- CBPR processes are often inconsistent with academic practices (e.g., tenure-track)
A Model for Community-Academic Collaborations

- Identify content area with the community
- Review the literature to support the need
- Co-create research questions with the community
- Build on community models
- Create multidisciplinary collaborations with healthcare providers & additional stakeholders
- Identify funding sources
- Write grant proposals
- Write additional grant proposals
- Hope that your community partners can wait...
Our Team

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