Enriching a Research Culture in an Osteopathic Medicine-Based Outreach Program

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Challenge/Issue

There is a growing need for osteopathic medicine physicians, faculty, staff and students to engage in research. While the need is evident, there is a lack of knowledge surrounding how to partner with clinical agencies who are traditionally unfamiliar with research.

Embedded in Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine (HCOM), Community Health Programs (CHP) and its Heritage Community Clinic (HCC) provides free, quality healthcare for uninsured and underinsured people in southeastern OH:

- Nearly 14,500 encounters with individuals
- Spanning 22 counties in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Focused on community outreach and providing students with clinical experiences, CHP has not been actively engaged in research activities. To align with HCOM’s strategic initiative to expand primary care research, scholarly output, and engage community members, CHP is an ideal partner to assess and expand HCOM’s reach into rural communities as well as providing a solid research foundation for faculty, staff and students.

Objective

To create a research culture that empowers and facilitates engagement of community members, community outreach staff and expands the reach of primary care research initiatives into Appalachian communities.

Approach

Knowledge, attitudes, experiences, & training survey administered to all CHP employees & managers

Semi-structured facilitated discussions with CHP employees & managers (employee & 5 manager meetings)

Identified gaps & training needs and drafted a research partnership checklist

Results

Survey (N= 18 respondents 94% response rate)

Figure 1: Beliefs about Research & Researchers

- **Improve Care**
- **Researchers don’t understand**
- **Advances knowledge**
- **Need training**
- **PHI secure**
- **Personal gain motivation**
- **Positive View about Research**

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Themes from Discussions

**Capacity**

- "Finding capacity is a challenge - tracking the number of studies, who qualifies, manage recruitment for front and parson and/or mobile unit team can be challenging (due to clinical duties)."

- "I wish they understood how important we (CHP are) are - we make a difference in people’s lives and we take it seriously."

- "(The projects) needs to be MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL."

**Connection/Alignment with CHP Mission**

- "Start out with experiences in our clinics - familiarity with the clinic culture is key."

- "We are not research adverse. We want to be involved and want it to work for us, patients, clinic flow and researchers."

**Involving CHP/Communication/Building Relationships**

- "Seeing the community (and patients) in people first and (research) participants second."

- "It’s a clinic with real patients... and aren’t always the same as other clinics... they are focusing on ‘welly scaffold’.

**Cultural Sensitivity**

Sample Community Health Programs Research Partnership Checklist

- **New Opportunity**
  - To ensure that we have the appropriate population, please include us as you develop your project.
  - Talk with us - we may have research questions that may be of interest to you.

- **Project Development/Grant Development**
  - Prior to setting up and site visits, talk with Shanti Collaborative Director. This can impact you with the appropriate team member and awareness of competing efforts in the department.
  - Situated in rural/urban setting - it is essential to collaborate with others to have a better understanding of the local processes, patients, and we can have a better understanding of your needs and interests.

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