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Improving Access to Community Health Resources

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The content of this paper is affiliated with Boise State University, specifically within the

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Abstract

My capstone project included a collaborative effort between myself, community members, and local organizations to improve the accessibility of community health resources and health outcomes of community members. My approach included creating an accessible website in different languages to hold up-to-date community health resources and essential details regarding access. These resources can fall into the social determinants of health categories such as economic stability, education access, health care access, neighborhood and built environment social, and community context. This project was important in helping to prevent poor health outcomes, such as community members getting diagnosed with preventative chronic diseases, which can hurt the individual and the larger community by increasing healthcare costs and the doctor-to-patient ratio. Research has noted that health literacy can be the extent to which an individual can obtain, interpret, and comprehend a basic level of health information. Creating a centralized website to hold resources that are accurate and updated for community members while also addressing ways to improve accessibility and utilization works to benefit all stakeholders involved in this project.

Keywords: Community health resources, accessibility, health outcomes, health literacy

Section 1: Introduction to Capstone Project

For my capstone project, I worked to make community health resources more accessible for community members who face barriers and need help to improve their health outcomes. I also worked with local organizations that wanted to enhance the engagement and effectiveness of the resources they created for the community by finding ways to strengthen the bridge between community members and local organizations. My approach included creating an accessible website in different languages to hold up-to-date community health resources and essential details regarding access. These resources can fall into the social determinants of health categories such as economic stability, education access, health care access, neighborhood and built environment social, and community context. This project was important in helping to prevent poor health outcomes, such as community members getting diagnosed with preventative chronic diseases, which can hurt the individual and the larger community by increasing healthcare costs and the doctor-to-patient ratio. Creating an accessible website with centralized resources that were accurate and updated benefited community members in addressing barriers to accessing resources and improving the utilization of community health resources.

Section 2: Elements coming together

Innovative Approach

First, to make community resources more accessible, I started working with local organizations to identify and gather community resources that fall within the scope of the five

social determinants of health categories. The first barrier I encountered during my research was

that many local resources were outdated or inaccurate. The second barrier was the "how"

community members would access resources quickly and accurately in the future. With this

information obtained, I was able to develop my either/or statement. Either we start searching for

resources now while dealing with outdated information or wait until there's an updated and

centralized list on an accessible website with accurate information. To justify why this project

was important, preventing poor health outcomes, such as community members getting diagnosed

with preventative chronic diseases, can benefit the individual and the larger community by

lowering healthcare costs and the doctor-to-patient ratio. My approach included creating an

accessible website in different languages to hold up-to-date community resources that would

improve access and health outcomes.

I further collaborated with local organizations to learn new ways of meeting community

members where they were. My approach incorporated innovation by meeting community

members where they are as I worked towards reducing the barriers to accessibility among

community resources and achieving better health outcomes for the community. With the help of

my background research that incorporated peer-reviewed studies in fields such as public health

and community betterment, I was able to continue to get in-person collaboration from

community members and personnel from local organizations.

Emotional Intelligence

Having the opportunity to work on my capstone project has helped improve my

awareness of myself and the awareness of others. This occurred when I faced an early obstacle in

my project where I needed to get the full use out of the website I was creating. After many tries

to get my website up and running, I started a reflective thought process centered around "why" I

wasn't as tech-savvy with this website as opposed to other complex technological tasks. After

serval days of being blocked by this obstacle, I discovered Tasha Eurich's Tedtalk, "Increase

your self-awareness with one simple fix," where she shared a quote that resonated with me which

stated "Yesterday, I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today, I am wise, so I am

changing myself." -Rumi. This helped me think more about "what" I could do to improve my

approach to the problem rather than "why" I was dealing with the problem. In doing so, I could

ask for help and address the technical issues I was facing by connecting with a customer success

manager who helped me find effective solutions.

The approach I am taking with this capstone project involves a flexible process of

learning and adjusting to meet the stakeholders' needs and complete the mission of improving the

accessibility of health resources in the community. In the third module, I plan to incorporate

short questionnaires to get a baseline of community members' health literacy level and ability to

access resources on their own. In interacting with community members and local organizations, I

plan to consider emotional intelligence and reflect on what my stakeholder may feel towards my

website and how it might impact my capstone project in the future. The research I plan to

undertake on finding and creating a centralized website of community health resources to

improve health outcomes is valuable because it can significantly impact the lives of underserved

and rural communities to access such practical community health resources.

Creative Thinking

While working on my project, I was able to get myself into a particular mindset where

flexibility was vital. Flexibility helped a lot when I encountered obstacles in building the website

and creating the baseline questionnaires. In a way, looking to be flexible to reach my goals each

week helped me also find creativity in addressing different aspects of the project. For example,

in working with community members to get a baseline measure of their health and technology

literacy, I found it challenging to keep track of the paper surveys when they were completed.

Some problems included pages would end up missing, and some questions were not answered.

To address this problem, I needed to refer back to my research to find an alternative way to

conduct surveys that would work for the community and me. In doing so, I created a digital

version which made things much more uncomplicated in conducting the surveys and having

access to the baseline data.

Using a creative framework helped me understand that taking the best path forward in my

circumstance is more useful than taking the right path when deciding between a variety of

choices. My approach is unique in that I am fortunate to collaborate with community members

and local organizations to achieve this goal of improving the community's overall health. With

the support and collaboration of peers, community members, and local organizations, I find it

manageable to be flexible and adjust different aspects of my project to achieve the goal, even if

the goal changes.

Your Innovative Solution

My capstone project sought to improve health outcomes and literacy for community

members who face barriers to accessing and utilizing existing community health resources. A

plan was made to connect existing resources that address problems relating to the categories

outlined in the social determinants of health, such as economic stability, education access, and

healthcare access to community members, in a more effective and accessible way. I noticed a

problem where local organizations create resources and projects that seek to improve the lives of

community members. Still, there needed to be more accessibility and solutions to obstacles that

keep utilization low. To address this, I referenced the sustaining innovation model, where I

worked with local organizations to gather resources outlined in the social determinist of health

categories. In doing so, an effort was made to keep and improve existing community resources

by accurately and explicitly keeping the most up-to-date information.

　　　　Next, I worked to address obstacles that community members might face in attempting to

access resources, such as language barriers and access to technology. First, in creating the

website, I made the website compatible with many different languages in an effort to make

navigating the website more accessible and useful. I view potential outcomes as community

members utilizing resources to improve their health and quality of life independently with fewer

obstacles. This outcome will demonstrate innovation by strengthening the bridge between local

organizations and community members regarding community resources. To reference the

sustaining innovation model, I seek to improve the way in which community members access

resources and local organizations create opportunities while keeping in mind the intended

audience. Compared to other approaches, my solution is innovative because accessibility and

meeting the stakeholders are vital aspects of my project. With that in mind, I use creativity and

other strategic models to stay informed on the state of my problem and solution in hopes of

continuously being innovative, meeting the needs of all stakeholders, and adapting to changes in

the future.

Section 3: Results

My capstone project sought to benefit the stakeholders through a preventive lens by way of connecting existing community resources to community members that need them the most. An approach used during this process was creating a website as a centralized hub where community members would find resources with reduced obstacles such as language and technological barriers. The project also sought to improve community health literacy by providing existing educational resources and working to make them more accessible such as videos/infographics/articles that cover topics on diabetes, hypertension, and affordable healthy diets.

Community members have benefited by gaining access to much-needed community health resources that seek to improve their health outcomes. For example, a community member was unable to purchase new reading glasses after his old ones were lost. This created a great problem in his daily life as he was unable to regularly read the news and continued to suffer from constant headaches. Another problem he feared was the cost of purchasing a new pair of glasses for which he needed the funds. During my research to find community health resources within the categories of the social determinants of health, I found a program that helped community members with chronic conditions qualify for free prescription glasses. With the relief he felt after overcoming this barrier and accessing that resource, I knew I needed to continue my project to benefit more community members in the future. In addition, working to improve the health literacy of community members through efforts such as providing educational resources that focus on preventing preventable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. This will benefit community members as they will not be surprised by a preventable chronic health condition as

the project will continue to improve and incorporate other aspects associated with improving

health outcomes.

On the other hand, local organizations have benefited as stakeholders by way of

awareness as they now know the importance of meeting the "interned audience," who are the

community members where they are, in an effort to improve engagement and effectiveness. For

example, a property manager of a low-income, elderly, and disabled apartment complex needed

help increasing the engagement of community members with a needs questionnaire to help

gather resources they might need. A major obstacle for her was that many community members

had low English proficiency and lacked formal education in the United States. One of these

community members was a family member of mine whom I interacted with the property

manager regularly to interpret for them. After discussing the problem, I pointed out that

engagement with the need's questionnaire could be improved if questions were translated into

different languages and to get volunteer interpreters in the community to help improve

understanding.

Section 4: Conclusion

Early in my capstone project, I anticipated results would positively impact all stakeholders involved and that I wouldn't run into any barriers. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case. First, the baseline survey I incorporated in the being stages of my project proved ineffective in pointing to what resources community members knew how to access and those they didn't. Second, I was surprised by the educational resources as community members learned quite a lot and were able to remember important health information during our subsequent meeting. Using multi-lingual videos to educate community members on improving their health literacy confirmed what I expected to happen when one meets an intended audience where they are. I think many aspects of my capstone project can be done differently, such as broadening the scope of community resources that might indirectly impact health outcomes. These include gathering educational modules on understanding how genetic history affects health and understanding the impacts of nutrition from a macrobiotic lens.

Section 5: References

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Section 6: Appendix

Attached is a link to capstone project:

https://sites.google.com/u.boisestate.edu/communityresources/home