

Critical reflection in practice: Generating Knowledge from the Interactions with Promotores for Engagement in Neurocognitive Disorders.

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Background

Colonias are underserved areas along the Texas-Mexico border, with high incidences of neurocognitive disorders, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease (AD). Our goal is to build capacity to reduce risk, facilitate treatment for affected individuals, and provide caregiver support. Our aim was to construct an approach that was reflective and would reveal the rich and diverse ways in which people make meaning of their experiences and interactions with scientists, faculty, staff and students.

Methods

We examined our work with local community health workers. (CHWs), *promotores* in Spanish, to establish contact with, engage, mobilize, and educate the Hispanic communities of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV). Qualitative research methods were the principal way to approach this aim, including critical reflection.

Results

We now have 347 certified *promotores* in LRGV: 174 in Cameron County, 169 in Hidalgo County, 3 in Starr County, and 1 in Willacy County. Most of the *promotores* in LRGV are female, Spanish-speakers (98%) although half of them are also fluent in English and more than half of the *promotores* have five years or more as a state-certified CHW. Assumptions about knowledge, power and reflexivity surfaced in the interactions with members of the academic world interacting with *Colonia's* residents.

Conclusions

Aspects of critical reflection, including deconstructing assumptions about knowledge, power and reflexivity, are useful to guide actions that facilitate capacity building in the *Colonias*, as well as action research methodology. The LRGV population's characteristics make early detection of AD and dementia and support for patients and

caregivers' high priorities and clearly understanding the role of *promotores* as mediators is important.

Keywords: Colonias, Promotoras, Dementia.