

Learners Engaging with Hispanic Communities to address COVID-19 Inequities by Developing a Cultural Competence Guide for Public Health Messaging

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Introduction

The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) has the highest rates of obesity and diabetes nationwide which have compounded the impact of COVID-19. We propose addressing underlying mistrust and systemic racism through a resident-and-student-learner-led, community-engaged, educational public health campaign targeting the Hispanic community in the RGV.

Methods

Twelve students were provided interdisciplinary leadership skills in a community-engaged public messaging campaign covering issues of COVID-19 inequities. Learners used these skills to engage with clinic community partners in qualitative interviews regarding the patient population to guide the creation of a culturally competent public health messaging rubric for the Hispanic community.

Results

Pre-intervention survey results showed that the patient population was 97% Hispanic/Latino with a 73% language preference for Spanish and a 98% uninsured status. Clinic leaders described 67% of their patient population as being high risk for COVID-19 with multiple underlying risk factors, including obesity, hypertension, and diabetes. Surveyed clinic leaders selected that PSAs need to have clarity of the message and availability in the patient's preferred language. Our team created two focused, culturally competent rubrics for the Hispanic community.

Discussion

This research has shown that it is imperative to be able to evaluate which PSAs are effective in delivering their intended message as well as being able to monitor the effects on their target audience. The Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities needs more effective public health messaging to decrease testing fears, improve contact tracing, motivate individuals to seek medical care, and to ultimately address the rampant COVID-19 inequities that exist.

Key Words systemic racism, health inequities, COVID-19, public health messaging, Hispanic, Rio Grande Valley, interdisciplinary, culturally competent rubric