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2012

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Recommended Citation

Olmstadt, William; Brown, Douglas; Ball, Linda; Montana, Michael; Williams, Luther S.; and Williams, Monique, "An interdisciplinary ethics and health disparities journal club for responsible conduct of research training." 2012 Medical Library Association Annual Meeting and Exhibition, Seattle, Washington. 2012. Paper 30.
http://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/becker_pubs/30

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An interdisciplinary ethics and health disparities journal club for responsible conduct of research training

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Abstract

Purpose: The authors evaluate a biweekly journal club for sustained responsible conduct of research (RCR) training in the context of addressing the health issues of an increasingly diverse and aging nation.

Setting/Participants/Resources: The journal club leaders are faculty and staff at a private, urban midwestern medical school and a national bioethics center at a rural, southern historically black college and university (bioethics center). Journal club participants are affiliated with one of the two schools and other local higher education programs. The bioethics center conducted more formal journal club didactics with larger audiences using slide presentations while the midwestern medical school employed more informal discussions. Participants represent multiple disciplines, including nursing, geriatrics, philosophy, occupational therapy, and infectious disease. Since 2010, a health sciences librarian has been included as a participant at the medical school. **Methods:** Attendance records provide required documentation for RCR training for National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other funders. Journal club topics include informed consent, ethical implications of study design, minority recruitment, mentoring, ethical implications of health care provider involvement in research, data management, conduct of ethical literature searches, research misconduct, and authorship and publication. Participants in both programs were surveyed about the impact of the journal club on their research, education, and funding efforts.

Results: A total of twenty individuals attended at least one of the journal club sessions at the midwestern medical school. Journal club attendees who participated in three or greater journal club sessions were invited to complete an anonymous survey. In the inaugural year of the bioethics center's training program, a total of 14 students completed training. Quantitative and qualitative feedback elicited by the survey indicated participants increased their knowledge of key responsible conduct of research topics and the ethical dimensions of RCR research.

Conclusions: A journal club format provides a relevant and effective means to increase knowledge and proficiency in RCR.

Background

The journal club leaders are faculty and staff at a private, urban midwestern medical school and a national bioethics center at a rural, southern historically black college and university (bioethics center). Journal club participants are affiliated with one of the two schools and other local higher education programs. The bioethics center conducted more formal journal club didactics with larger audiences using slide presentations, while the midwestern medical school employed more informal discussions. Participants represent multiple disciplines. Since 2010, a health sciences librarian has been included as a participant at the medical school site.

Results

Medical School

A total of twenty individuals attended at least one journal club session. Journal club attendees who participated in three or more sessions were invited via e-mail to complete an anonymous 20-question survey. The survey included 15 Likert responses (Strongly Agree/Strongly Disagree) and 5 open-ended questions to elicit feedback about specific topics covered in the journal club. A total of 5 individuals responded as of March 2012. All participants answered the Likert questions as "Strongly Agree" or "Agree."

Bioethics Center

In the inaugural year of the bioethics center's training program, a total of 14 students completed training. Students in the bioethics center training program completed pre- and post-tests to assess perceived knowledge.

Bioethics Center Results

	Pre	Mid	Post
Research ethics- role in the prevention of harm to research subjects/patients	2.35	4.00	4.15
Research ethics- in the design, conduct of research and dissemination of research results	2.25	3.00	3.25
Understanding of ethical principles(beneficence, justice, autonomy, privacy)	2.00	3.50	4.50
Informed consent- understanding of HHS regulations	3.00	4.00	4.00
Clinical trials- understanding of the five criteria to equal ethically acceptable practice	1.50	2.50	3.00
Health disparities- understanding of incidence and status/population	2.00	3.00	3.50
research ethics- understanding of the roles of IBRs	3.00	4.75	4.75
Understanding of the significance of race, class, gender and nationality –philosophical and human justice in research and healthcare	1.25	3.25	4.00
Understanding of how human values influence research and healthcare & and DHHS/NIH 1986 policy for the inclusion of minorities in biomedical research;the1990 review of implementation of the policy	1.25	2.75	3.25
Research ethics- knowledge of the Nuremberg Code, Declaration of Helsinki, the Belmont Report, DHHS Regulations for biomedical and Behavioral Research	2.00	3.75	3.75
Awareness of notable cases of racism in biomedical research and health care	1.25	3.00	3.75
Objectivity in research analysis- e.g., the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill case	1.25	3.00	3.00
Understanding of the USPHS Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Macon county.AL	2.50	4.00	4.50
Case Study- Pfizer drug clinical trial in Nigeria- post the syphilis study implications	0.50	2.50	3.50

Table 1: Bioethics Training Program, 2009-2010

Pretest and Posttest Issues and Responses

"Pre" refers to the pretest; "mid" refers to survey results iteratively accumulated after special course presentations and "post" refers to the results obtained via the examination at the end of the course, inclusive of the practicum. The opinions of the training program participants are rated 1 through 5, with 5 being representative of most substantial awareness and understanding of the issue(s) and 1 indicative of the least.

Examples of articles used at the medical school

Concepts of race

Corbie-Smith G, Henderson G, Blumenthal C, Dorrance J, Estroff S. Conceptualizing race in research. J Natl Med Assoc. 2008 Oct;100(10):1235-43. PubMed PMID: 18942287; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC3057432.

Reporting research in the media

De Meyer G, Shapiro F, Vanderstichele H, Vanmechelen E, Engelborghs S, De Deyn PP, Coart E, Hansson O, Minthon L, Zetterberg H, Blennow K, Shaw L, Trojanowski JQ; Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative. Diagnosis-independent Alzheimer disease biomarker signature in cognitively normal elderly people. Arch Neurol. 2010 Aug;67(8):949-56. PubMed PMID: 20697045; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC2963067.

Grounded theory for qualitative data analysis

Cutcliffe JR. Methodological issues in grounded theory. J Adv Nurs. 2000 Jun;31(6):1476-84. Review. PubMed PMID: 10849161.

Conclusions

Quantitative and qualitative feedback elicited by the survey indicated participants increased their knowledge of key responsible conduct of research topics and the ethical dimensions of RCR research. A journal club format provides a relevant and effective means to increase knowledge and proficiency in RCR.

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