

Mapping a Strategic Plan for Health: Community-Based Participatory Research with Underserved, Low-Income, Urban Neighborhoods

Gail Zandee

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Since 2002, community-based participatory research methods have been used by the Calvin College Nursing Department to map out a strategic health plan for three urban, low-income, underserved neighborhoods. Community-based participatory research is a collaborative approach to inquiry, in which community and academia are co-teachers and co-learners (Anderson, Calvillo, & Fongwa, 2007; Heffner, Zandee, & Schwander, 2003). It emphasizes shared power, building community capacity, and joint research with the goal of action, to improve the health of the community (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). Nine focus groups and 449 door-to-door health surveys were completed across the three urban neighborhoods between 2002 and 2004.

Neighborhood meetings were held to share the results of the research, and to give residents a platform to identify the top five health concerns for their neighborhood along with recommended solutions. Neighborhood strategic plans were then collaboratively written documenting the baseline research, and linking the resident-driven health concerns and solutions with nursing student learning experiences across the nursing curriculum. The top health concern identified by all three neighborhoods was lack of access to health care. The resident-driven solution addressing this issue was development of a Community Health Worker Program. Residents would be trained in basic health care and would work with nursing students to promote health and access to care in the neighborhood. The Community Health Worker Program was identified on the strategic plan as a strategy to promote access to care, and was initiated in the three neighborhoods in 2005. Evaluation measures were outlined in the strategic plan to measure effectiveness of the collaborative program.

Between 2009 and 2011, students and Community Health Worker Program members collaborated to complete the same research process of focus groups and door-to-door surveys as

initiated in 2002. Neighborhood meetings were conducted to disseminate the research results, review the top five health concerns, recommend solutions, and update the strategic plan. Results showed that emergency room use and barriers to health care decreased in the three neighborhoods between 2004 and 2011; access to dental care increased. Combining community-based participatory research with written strategic plans was found to be a useful strategy to unite community members, nursing students and faculty members, and neighborhood organizations in a long-term partnership addressing resident-driven health concerns and solutions in urban underserved neighborhoods while educating nursing students.

References

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About the Author

Gail Zandee is the community partnership coordinator and assistant professor of nursing at Calvin College. Her research interests include health promotion, health disparities, social determinants of health, access to health care, and community health workers. Zandee earned her BSN from Calvin College and her MSN from Wayne State University.

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Introduction

In 2002, the Calvin College Nursing Department initiated a community-based nursing curriculum. They sought to spread community experiences across the curriculum and have those experiences be driven by the health needs of the community.

Background

- Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR): a collaborative approach to inquiry where students and academics are co-teachers and learners 1,2
- Empowers shared power, building community capacity, and joint research with the goal of action, improving the health of the community 3
- Empowers the community to identify health concerns and solutions
- Connects resident voice to nursing student curriculum
- Practicum experiences in community-based neighborhoods in 2002
- Between 2002-2004, qualitative and quantitative data gathered through focus groups and door to door surveys to assess neighborhood strengths and health concerns.
- Neighborhood meetings to report data and have residents identify top 5 health concerns & solutions
- Strategic plan documents top health concerns and solutions and links with nursing student activities
- One example of a neighborhood driven solution to address lack of access to care was developing a Community Health Worker (CHW) Program where residents are trained in basic health care and work with students promoting health and access to care in the neighborhood
- Between 2009-2011, students and CHWs collaborate on repeating same research process as in 2002-2004
- Update strategic plan

Funding for CBPR and CHW program received from Calvin College, Spectrum Health Healthier Communities Department and a HUD Community Partnership Outreach Grant

Focus Groups

Focus groups conducted by the Calvin College Nursing Program between 2002-2004 and repeated in 2009-2011

- Encourage residents to share views about neighborhood strengths, day to day concerns and health care
- Three focus groups conducted per neighborhood (results from 2010 focus group in Baxter/ Madison neighborhood below)

Neighborhood Strengths

- Good neighbors who take care of and watch out for each other
"We all kinda link to each other and look out for each other..."
- Community and Neighborhood Resources
"Like the Baxter Community Center cause I've been there more times I was 15."
- The Churches
"I think there are 7 churches in the Baxter area."

Barriers to Health Care

- Limited or no medical/ dental insurance
"They can't get out of Medicaid and there's no coverage for anything else."
- Transportation
"These is a large percentage of people that just don't have any coverage."
- High cost of health care
- Lack of knowledge of resources or when to seek help
"People don't know where to go..."
- Long wait for an appointment or insurance
"It's a long time you have to wait...and that's crazy to me!"

Top Health Concerns

- High Blood Pressure
- Diabetes
"Every woman is on some...depression medication."
- Asthma
- Alcohol/ Drugs
"A community of people with no outlet, no help..."
- Obesity
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Neighborhood Survey

Door to door health surveys conducted by the Calvin College Nursing Program between 2002-2004 and repeated in 2009-2011.

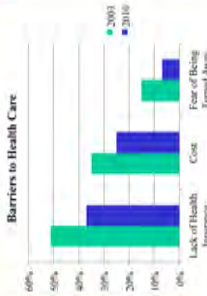
- Encourage residents to share ideas about their health and the health care system
- Systematic random sampling used to conduct health survey in each neighborhood.
- Survey in 2009-2011 conducted in partnership with Community Health Workers (CHWs)
- Between 128-191 surveys completed per neighborhood



Strategic Plan

- Based on focus group and survey results, neighborhood residents identify top health concerns and solutions
- Strategic plan identifies neighborhood strengths, top health concerns, strategies to address concerns, and evaluation measures
- Top 5 Health Concerns of Baxter/ Madison
 - Lack of Access to Health Care
 - High Blood Pressure
 - Unintended Pregnancies and STI's
 - Depression/ Anxiety
 - Obesity
- Resident Driven Solutions
 - Community Health Worker Program
 - Knowing Your Body Kit
 - Depression/ Anxiety Support Groups

Evaluation Baxter/ Madison Neighborhood



Access to Dental Care



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