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Development of Learners Engaging With Hispanic Communities to Address COVID-19 inequities- Si Se Puede!

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Abstract

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted the health disparities that exist in marginalized communities across the country. Communities of color across the entire country have higher mortality and morbidity rates (Jordan 2020) due to COVID-19. The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) is a four-county region that consists of a population of over 90% Hispanic. Furthermore, the RGV harbors some of the highest rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease nationwide. The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine (UTRGVSOM) working alongside the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Nurturing Experiences for Tomorrow's Community Leaders (NEXT) developed an inter-disciplinary public service initiative to help address the inequities seen the RGV.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the social inequities and systemic racism that have long plagued communities of color. Moreover, a large portion of the RGV population has a long-standing distrust in healthcare due to documentation status that deters many from actively engaging in the healthcare system. UTRGV SOM initiative is a learner-led project composed of "Core 12 Learner Leaders" consisting of medical students, masters of social work students, and resident physicians mentored by Dr. Chelsea Chang. It is a community centered public health campaign targeting Spanish-speaking residents and the deaf and hard of hearing in the RGV. To help address the inequities, the team will create a rubric to evaluate the cultural competence of local service announcements (PSAs) and help disperse these throughout the community. We will then partner with El Milagro Clinic and Hope Family Health Clinic to hold focus groups with community leaders and patients to tap their wealth of knowledge around the healthcare needs of the RGV. Overall, this initiative will help disintegrate the disparities and systemic racism that has long plagued the community. We also aim to increase community knowledge about COVID-19 prevention, treatment, and clinical trials (Utibe 2020).

Materials and Methods

Timeline

The timeline for the project was based on the requirements set forth by the AAMC. The project was also broken down to five different objectives with their own particular deadlines. (see Figure 1 below).

Si se puede! Timeline

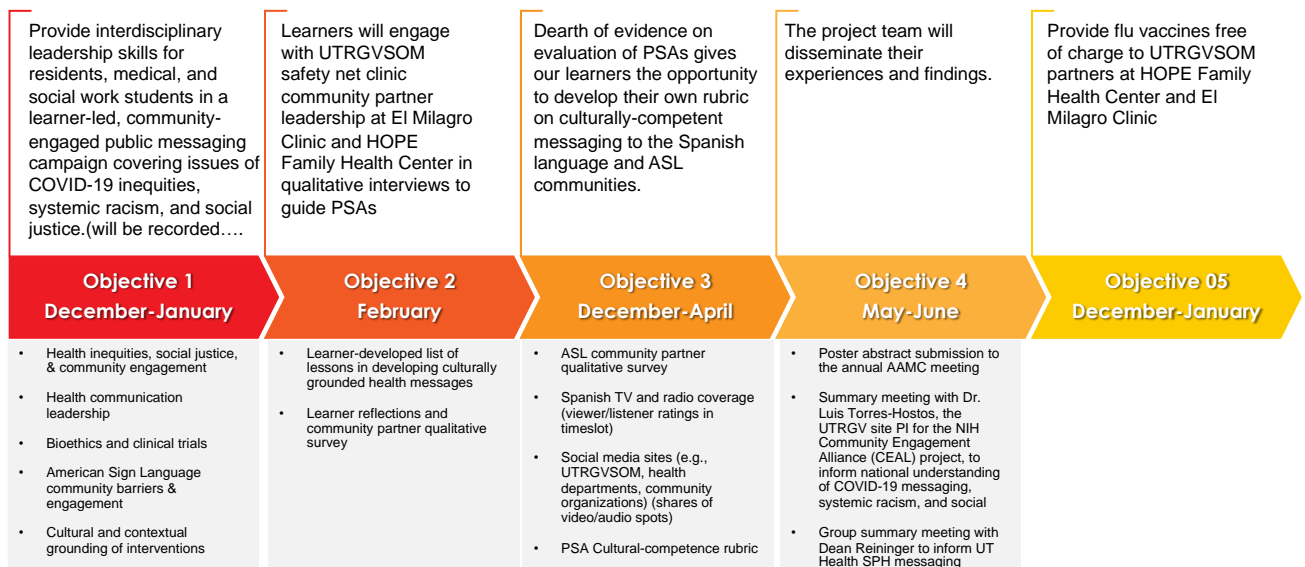


Figure 1. Breakdown of timeline for the project was based on the requirements set forth by the AAMC

Roles of the learners

of medical students, masters of social work students and resident physicians will be involved in all aspects of the public health campaign but will have primary roles to make things as efficient as possible. The roles are broken down to three main objectives and the learners are evenly divided into those groups. Objective 2 is centered around meetings with community clinic leadership and patients to help guide the development of the PSAs rubric. Objective 3 is centered around the development of cultural-competent evaluation rubric of PSAs. Objective 4 is centered around disseminating the experience and findings of the project at the annual AAMC conference and UTRGV SOM research symposiums. In my capacity as project director, I help facilitate team communication and task completion. I also have the responsibility to attend AAMC progress meetings and assist in the development of work-plans to make sure the team is meeting deadlines. Lastly, learners will lead a town hall session for all UTRGV SOM residents, medical, and social work students to learn about the COVID-19 population

health messaging campaign project and inform the team's community engagement intervention and PSA messaging. Important points made at the townhall will be based on the discussions with the RGV community and community partners will be invited to share their experiences.

Interactive Didactics Sessions

The project will provide the learners with five interactive-didactic workshops hosted with experts in the field of health inequities, health communication leadership, bioethics and American Sign Language engagement to adequately prepare the learners for evaluation of PSAs and engagement with the community. Team members will use the skills and knowledge they learned from their didactics to help complete the various project objectives. Learners will be evaluated through pre/post-test surveys to assess didactics outcomes.

Engaging with Patients and Leaders of Safety Net Community Clinics

Learners will lead a workshop with leadership at El Milagro Clinic and HOPE Family Health Center with qualitative interviews to guide evaluation of public service announcement (PSAs). The main goal of the workshop is to get community feedback and make sure the PSAs are as culturally grounded as possible. After meeting with the clinic leaders the next step is to meet with clinic patients and share the lessons learned in developing appropriate health messaging to create an ongoing discussion and iterative process.

Developing PSA Cultural-Competence Rubric

To fully address COVID-19 inequities systemic racism and mistrusts of the healthcare system in the RGV, the development of cultural-competent evaluation rubric of PSAs is paramount. Evaluating PSAs targeted at Hispanic populations will be an opportunity to focus on what messaging is effective and appropriate in Hispanic populations. Important considerations to evaluating PSAs are: what message are you trying to convey, who are you trying to reach and how you will you distribute the it. All these questions are addressed when assessing an effective PSA. It is also important that the evaluation rubric of PSAs have an emphasis on the deaf and hard of hearing community In the RGV.

Results

To evaluate the didactic sessions effectiveness and practicality all learners will be assessed through pre/post-test surveys. Results of the surveys are pending conclusion didactic sessions.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare many of the social inequities in communities of color. An intradisciplinary team of medical students, masters of social work students, and resident physicians working alongside local community partners to develop a culturally competent public serve announcement evaluation rubric and implement a public health education campaign across the Rio Grande Valley to address COVID-19 inequities, and mistrust in the health care system. We hope that this project will inform

the public on COVID-19 prevention as well as increase the participation of Hispanic patients in treatment and clinical trials. The diversity of these studies educational outcome are directly improved by being inclusive. It is imperative that our medical community create a workforce for the future that is capable of providing services to individuals regardless of the zip code they grew up in. By addressing these problems that have long plagued communities of color, it will ultimately result in a greater system of health care equity.

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