

Transforming Health Disparities into Health Possibilities: A Day in the Life of a CHEER Community Health Worker

Ashley Gaither

The Consortium for Health Education, Economic Empowerment and Research (CHEER), Memphis, Tennessee

ABSTRACT

Background: Community health workers have been used for decades to foster the health of community residents, especially communities that have many health and economic challenges. Our CHEER Community health workers (CHW) include residents from the 38126 zip code area and students who attend the University of Tennessee Health Science Center as well as LeMoyne-Owen College. *This poster focuses the day in the life of a CHW team member who lives in the 38126 zip code area and provides a description of their experiences on the CHEER team.*

Objective: To raise awareness in the 38126 zip code about diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and obesity.

Methods: Community health workers talked and shared their experiences. These experiences were summarized and the summary shared with the two CHEER researchers that supervise group so that a poster could be created to describe these experiences to others.

Results: We agreed that because we share ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, and life experiences with the community residents, we can better serve in our roles. As CHWs, we serve an important function of connecting the community's residents and congregants with culturally appropriate health education and information. We also provide informal counseling and coaching about changing health behaviors. The CHW team provides materials about self-care and habits that have an impact on health, such as information about food, diet and nutrition, smoking cessation, and medicine compliance. We also provide some direct services such as blood pressure, blood glucose, and cholesterol screenings. Community-engagement health promotion activities can be one-one or group level interventions. Finally, we assist our community participants in locating resources within the community and the Memphis area.

Implications: Our outreach activities are conducted in neighborhoods, agencies, and churches and can have a positive effect on the health of residents and congregants in the zip code area.

OBJECTIVES

- To raise awareness in the 38126 zip code on diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and obesity
- Distribute information to residents regarding these issues
- Assess residents to see if they are at risk for any of these disease
- Intervene with residents and create methods to become healthy and stay healthy

METHODS/ STRATEGIES

CHW received educational classes and practical experiences in the following areas:

- Research and community based research
- Role of the CHW and the health coach
- Obtaining finger stick blood samples for glucose and cholesterol readings
- Arm and wrist methods for checking blood pressure
- Measurement of height and weight
- How to correctly read food labels

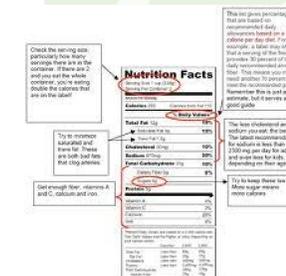


This presentation was made possible by grant number 1P20MD005118-02 from the National Center for Minority Health at the National Institutes of Health. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of NCMHD.

We also thank the residents who participated in CHEER activities and the UTHSC College of Nursing for printing this poster.

RESULTS

- Accurately check weight, blood pressure, height, cholesterol and glucose values
- Help to provide a 4 week intervention: Jeopardy game, food label reading, aerobics exercise, and walking challenge
- Assist participants in reading and understanding handouts and forms
- Follow up on participants to see if they are still taking steps to better their health



IMPLICATIONS

- Helped participants to leave the study with a better understanding of their own health, and ways to improve it
- Will have taught participants the importance of monitoring glucose, cholesterol, weight, and blood pressure
- Participants will know about specific health risk factors and ways to avoid them