Building Community Capacity for Health Disparities Research: A Regional Collaboration

Based on partnership work conducted with community-based organizations over the past decade, National Outreach Network (NON) Community Health Educator (CHE) Kathy Briant and Geographical Management of Cancer Health Disparities Program (GMaP) Coordinator Heidi Tham have observed that community organizations have a great deal of experiential knowledge and established trust. The result is the ability to provide outreach and education services that truly serve their clients’ needs. On the other hand, these organizations are often under-funded. They may not always have the resources and (wo)man-power to rigorously plan, implement and evaluate their work. They can make a little bit of money go a long way, but due to lack of funding, evaluation which is critical to documenting program success, is often an afterthought.

In 2013, after discussions with the Fred Hutch Health Disparities Research Center’s Community Advisory Board, Dr. Beti Thompson, CHE Briant and GMaP Coordinator Tham decided to try to build sustainable outreach and research capacity with diverse communities in Washington State by providing training, education and hands-on mentoring through grant-writing workshops. The workshops were designed to respond to a request for proposals for small grants. Eligibility requirements for the small grants were that the organization had to be a non-profit in Washington State and services had to be provided in the state. In addition, proposed projects should identify unmet need(s) within a defined community, explore or test solutions to health disparities issues, and/or increase understanding of factors that influence the health of diverse, racial, ethnic and underserved communities.

“Go in search of people, begin with what they know, build on what they have,” says an old Chinese proverb.

Go in search of people… Dr. Thompson, CHE Briant and GMaP Coordinator Tham did just that – they reached out to contacts at community organizations to invite them to the first workshop in January of 2014. Representatives from six organizations participated.

…begin with what they know… Prior to the workshop, CHE Briant and GMaP Coordinator Tham reached out to people who were registered for the workshop to get an idea about any prior grant-writing experience and to learn about their ideas for their grant proposals. This helped inform the development of the grant-writing training.

Continued on page 2
...build on what they have. During the workshop, representatives from the six community organizations who participated in the grant-writing workshop were each matched with a mentor from the Fred Hutch/University of Washington Cancer Consortium. Their mentor had one-on-one time during the workshop to help them develop their proposal and review it before submission.

Submitted proposals went through a peer-review process and comments on proposals were given back to the organizations so that they could learn about their proposal’s strengths and weaknesses. If an organization was funded, the mentors were available to provide technical assistance in areas where the organizational partner might not have expertise.

Based on evaluations, the workshop was well received by participants. Five organizations followed through to complete and submit grant applications for review, and four of those organizations were funded. You can learn more about those grantees through this news article. As of December 2014, all four grantees had completed their projects.

In hindsight, the workshop and grant opportunity are not only building capacity within community organizations, they are also strengthening relationships between local communities and the Fred Hutch/University of Washington Cancer Consortium. Based on the success of the four funded projects and multiple inquiries from organizations, a second workshop was held in January 2015. Grant proposals are due in mid-February.

Pacific Islander Biospecimen Education and Collection (PIBEC) Project

There are currently over 1.2 million Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) living in the United States. NHPI, a deceivingly short term for what is actually a large collection of diverse and unique islander groups, is a catch-all for peoples with origins in Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Between 2000 and 2010, the NHPI population increased by 40%, making them the second fastest growing race group after Asians. The greatest numbers of NHPI reside in Hawai‘i, California, and Washington, respectively, but the numbers are increasing.

Arkansas, Nevada, and Alaska have all had over 100% increases in NHPI populations over the last 15 years.

A more shocking statistic of NHPI is that they are diagnosed with heart disease, cancer, and diabetes in rates that are higher than any other racial group. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 1 in 10 NHPI adults had been diagnosed with a stroke in 2010, and are 46% more likely to be diagnosed with cancer. With no conclusive evidence to suggest why these numbers are so high, it is becoming essential to further the body of knowledge that will support the Pacific Islander community in the health disparities that it faces.
The Pacific Islander Biospecimen Education and Collection (PIBEC) project aims to provide that support to the NHPI community through a campaign that will educate Pacific Islander adults on the importance of their biospecimens in research and biospecimen donations that will be used for innovative gene expression studies that are tailored for this unique population. PIBEC is a project of WINCART (Weaving an Islander Network for Cancer Awareness Research and Training), a collaborative community participatory effort that involves key NHPI community organizations throughout Southern California working together to promote health research and training of future PI cancer control leaders. Lead by Paula Palmer, Ph.D., of Claremont Graduate University, Sora Park Tanjasiri, Dr.P.H., M.P.H., of California State University at Fullerton, and Patchareeya Kwan, Ph.D., of California State University at Northridge, the PIBEC project works using a community based participatory research model that aims to develop, pilot, and evaluate processes and protocols to collect and store saliva samples from NHPI adults. The PIBEC project will build upon GMaP biospecimen efforts and will create a unique biorepository for the collection of Pacific Islander samples, one of the first of its kind in the United States. A key goal will be to analyze the research findings and disseminate the lessons learned from this study to the GMaP Region VI.

The Region VI GMaP has been very active in biospecimen education and collection. In 2013, GMaP spearheaded a series of biospecimen training seminar to assess the level of readiness of providers and ancillary staff in cancer institutions within diverse communities to participate in biospecimen collection efforts and to provide education to community members on the importance of providing biospecimens in the advancement of cancer disparities research. This pilot project bridged the gap between researchers, healthcare professionals and community members by providing reciprocal learning opportunities around biospecimen collection and donation, particularly for the diverse communities in the National Cancer Institute’s GMaP Region VI.

A Note from Our Partner, Chaminade University

Chaminade Undergraduate Researchers Take It To The Next Level

A Pacific Focused Institution

Chaminade University, a small (~1,200 undergraduates) private Catholic college in Honolulu has a mission of serving students and community in Hawaii and the US affiliated Pacific (Samoa, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands).

Chaminade’s dual mission in research and education addressing Pacific health disparities is helping prepare the next generation of health practitioners, researchers and policy makers from the Pacific, for the Pacific.

A Research Culture

A vibrant program of undergraduate research augments Chaminade’s rich inquiry-based science curriculum. Since 2007, 226 students have performed research internships at Chaminade or its national network of R1 research partners. One to two semester of research, embedded in an active research lab, are required of all bioscience majors. Students regularly present at national undergraduate meetings (SACNAS and ABRCMS) notably winning 14 national awards since 2012.

Continued on page 4
• Edward Cordasco (Chaminade Biology ’18) won an award in the cancer biology category for his work on the role of Merlin protein in predicting FAK inhibitor sensitivity in thyroid cancer at Chaminade’s research partner, the University of Colorado: Anschutz Medical Campus.

• Anthony Junker presented “The level of telomerase expression in human amnion cells correlates with proliferative capacity” at the Society for Gynecologic Investigation in Florence, Italy. Anthony has been a research assistant in Dr. Claire Wright’s NIH funded lab at Chaminade. The lab focuses on preterm birth, a health disparity in Samoan, Hawaiian and Filipino women. Anthony’s goal is a PhD and a career in cancer research.

Taking It To The Next Level

In 2014, Chaminade student researchers broke through two ‘glass ceilings’ with international professional scientific symposium and authorships on peer-reviewed publications. In faculty papers submitted in 2014, there were 6 undergraduate authors. Dean Helen Turner, head of Chaminade’s Natural Sciences Division says, “An authentic contribution to peer-reviewed research really distinguished our students. In addition to building their resumes, these students develop a passion that will stay with them through their careers in medicine, research or policy.”

• Johnny Aldan is an author of “Comparative analysis of lipotoxicity induced by endocrine, pharmacological and innate immune stimuli in rat basophilic leukemia cells” accepted for publication in the Journal of Immunotoxicology. Johnny seeks a career in medicine or public health serving his home community in Saipan.

Recent undergraduate (bolded) papers for Chaminade:


Ask the Mentor...

For this edition, the resident mentor is Dr. Beti Thompson. Dr. Thompson is a Full Member in the Division of Public Health Sciences, and the Associate Director of Minority Health and Health Disparities Research at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, as well as a Professor at the University of Washington School of Public Health. Dr. Thompson has a national and international reputation in community research, tobacco research, and health disparities research. In recent years, Dr. Thompson’s research portfolio has focused on work with populations affected by health disparities, including Hispanics in the Lower Yakima Valley of Washington State.

Question: A main issue in sharing power between a researcher and community organization(s) is the budget. As a researcher, how do you share money with the community?

This is an important question as the funding source usually lies in the hands of the researcher. When it comes to sharing resources, the best approach is to be transparent about the budget. One solution is to grant a subcontract to the community organizations or groups that are doing some of the work. This usually has to happen when grants are submitted for funding, although it is not impossible to do this after the fact. This is the preferred manner of sharing the budget. Sometimes, a Community Advisory Board (CAB) is the entity that shares the work. Because it is usually not an official organization, it is more difficult to give them resources. Some groups provide an honorarium or stipend for CAB members; this is one way of sharing resources.

**To submit a question to be answered by one of our GMaP mentors, please email your inquiry to Heidi Harbach Tham, Region 6 GMaP Coordinator at hharbach@fhcrc.org **

National Conferences

American Society of Preventive Oncology Annual Meeting

March 14—17, 2015
Birmingham, Alabama
http://aspo.org/annual-meeting

American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting

April 18—22, 2015
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
The AACR Annual Meeting 2015 will highlight the latest, most exciting discoveries in every area of cancer research and will provide a unique opportunity for investigators from all over the world to meet, interact, and share their insights. This year’s meeting theme – “Bringing Cancer Discoveries to Patients” – underscores the vital and inextricable link between discovery and treatment, and it reinforces the fact that research underpins all the progress we are making in the field toward cancer cures.

http://www.aacr.org/Meetings/Pages/MeetingDetail.aspx?EventItemID=25#.VNJe32jF9hE
Region 6 Institutional Partners

* Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
* University of California, Irvine
* Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science
* Chaminade University
* University of California, Los Angeles
* Stanford Hospital and Clinics
* University of California, San Diego
* ‘Imi Hale Native Hawaiian Cancer Network
* St. Joseph Health Center

* San Diego State University
* San Francisco State University
* University of Hawaii, Cancer Research Center of Hawaii
* University of Guam
* California State University, Fullerton
* Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
* Oregon Health and Science University
* Mountain States Tumor Institute
* Billings Clinic

GMaP Region 6
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
P.O. Box 19024, M3-B232
Seattle, WA  98109-1024

Business Office Phone:
206-667-7245

We encourage your comments and suggestions!

hharbach@fhcrc.org