

Roles of volunteers in program delivery and evaluation of a cardiovascular awareness program

CHAP

Cardiovascular Health Awareness Program
Programme de sensibilisation à la santé cardiovasculaire

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1 Background

The contribution of volunteers in health promotion programs is well documented with regards to their capacity to support chronic disease management. However, they have been less frequently involved in health research studies.

OBJECTIVE: To report on volunteer feedback on successive CHAP (Cardiovascular Health Awareness Program) implementations in Quebec.

HYPOTHESIS: Volunteers can be engaged and make a meaningful contributions to the research process, enabling the research team to gain important insights into the needs of the target community, and to modify the interventions accordingly.

2 Methods

The CHAP research team conducted a series of projects to test the CHAP model for the first time in Quebec. Drawing on the patient engagement literature, our research team involved volunteers in the **implementation of the intervention, data collection and study findings interpretation.**

In total, 68 volunteers have been recruited through advertisements in local newspapers and by collaboration with local Volunteer offices. Volunteers have been geographically- and age-matched to the patient population. When volunteers are chosen, they have been required to participate in a one day CHAP training session, facilitated by nurses and the research team.

After each CHAP implementation, we sought volunteers' formal feedback and input through **individual online and phone interviews** and through **focus groups** for each of the four projects conducted in the province.

3 Results

Implementing the intervention

- Volunteers assist with accurate measurement of participants' blood pressure and completing a cardiometabolic risk profile
- They provide participants with educational messages about lifestyle modifications,
- They recommend locally available free or low cost resources.

Collecting primary data

- Volunteers provided several practical and applied insights on the intervention and how data is collected, including the materials provided, consent forms, time and location of the sessions, and contact with participants.
- For example, they noted that patients prefer to have their physical measurements assisted by a volunteer of their own gender.

Interpreting study findings

- Summary of study findings were presented to volunteers, for discussion and feedback
- As volunteers resemble the targeted group, they were able to inform the research team on best intervention practices according to patient needs
- For example, they informed the research team that for patients to relax during the sessions they enjoyed talking and sharing throughout the session.

Elements from the Community Engagement in research Index (CERI, Khodyakov et al., 2013) where CHAP volunteers are engaged



4 Discussion

Having a unique perspective and a privileged link with participants in the research process, the volunteers will have made it possible to make several practical and applied innovations to CHAP projects. This information is useful to the research process to inform subsequent CHAP projects.

5 References

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