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The Need for Health and Community Resources in Monterey County

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Abstract

This part will be drafted during Milestone #3 and finalized for Milestone #4.

The Monterey County Health Department in the Planning Evaluation and Policy Unit (PEP), focuses on three areas; facilitating the implementation of the Health Department Strategic Plan, aligning and monitoring the department's performance standards. PEP has had an intern who noticed the needs of Monterey County residents facing barriers when accessing health and community resources. The Monterey County's Population is at 444,732 and more than half of the population are people of color. With having such a diverse population there are a lot of barriers to consider when accessing health and community resources such as language barriers and navigating health insurance. The consequences of this are a shorter life span, receiving poor quality care and lack or no information which can lead to mistrust in the community. This capstone project will demonstrate some successes and challenges faced in the community by interviewing agencies and organizations on their experiences. Based on the interns' findings, language barriers and community engagement play an important role as to why many Monterey County residents are facing barriers when it comes to accessing health and community resources. The intern recommends organizations and agencies to do more community outreach to help engaging community residents and build a connection.

Keywords: Community, health, diverse, access, resources

Agency & Communities Served

The Monterey County Health Department is always looking for ways to help the members of the community; they do this by empowering the community, enhancing prevention, ensuring access and engaging the workforce. This intern is serving the Planning Evaluation and Policy Unit (PEP), which focuses on three areas; facilitating the implementation of the Health Department Strategic Plan, aligning and monitoring the department's performance standards (County of Monterey, 2021). Mentorship is provided by Angelica Chavez and Vicente Lara, Angelica is the Chronic Disease Prevention Coordinator she conducts community engagement and training projects such as a Community Engagement Academy (enLACE), Vicente Lara is the Health in All Policies (HiAP) Manager.

The PEP supports the health department and neighborhood health equity and improvement efforts by assisting health department programs and community organizations with program evaluation, chronic disease and much more. One of the programs that the Monterey County Health Department developed as mentioned is the enLACE program, this program started in 2014. This program addresses community engagement, social determinants of health and their relationship to the health in the community. This is a great program for members of the community to learn about the local government, their impact on health and well being, meeting and building positive relationships with local community leaders and much more. The Monterey County Health Department's mission is to excel at providing quality services for the residents of all Monterey County residents while developing, maintaining, and enhancing the resources of the area (Monterey County, 2021). According to the 2020 Census the largest Monterey County racial/ethnic groups are Hispanic being 58.7% followed by White 29.9% and Asian 5.4%. The Monterey Health Department helps a diverse community.

The PEP in addition to providing these services also provide services for COVID-19. The COVID-19 Call Center, is a project that was implemented to help the community members have their questions answered on questions about COVID-19 and also direct them to the right services depending on their needs. The COVID-19 call Center has partnered with many other organizations such as 211 and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Problem Description

The Monterey County's Population at 444,732. More than half of the population are people of color. A key social issue in Monterey County is communities of color not receiving health and community resources. They have less access to quality care and have a higher rate of underlying conditions because of it. People of color face many disparities that cause them to face barriers that limit their access to health and community resources. This can also lead in the community residents to have mistrust in the health system. "In Monterey County, an estimated 68,000 people lack health insurance, according to researchers at the UCLA School of Public Health, and many can't afford the medical care they need" (Urivich, 2011). Many residences are not aware of the health and community resources that are available to help fulfill their needs. Although many residents can't afford the medical care they need there are resources that they are not aware of that can help them.

Contributing Factors

Lack of Health Insurance

Too many people in the community have little to no access to health care according to the Community Needs Assessment. In 2019, 11% of the residents in Monterey County did not have

health insurance, most of the uninsured are low income and are families that live above the poverty line. 14.1% of the population for whom poverty status is determined in Monterey County, CA live below the poverty line, a number that is higher than the national average of 13.1% (Data U.S, 2021). Most of the population who don't have health insurance only seek professional help when they are in need of an emergency but other than that they tend to put their health needs aside. Community members who are middle class and live above the poverty line not being able to receive health insurance, this affects the community by causing unexpected medical expenses and not allowing them to grow out of it since they don't qualify for enough help.

The low income health programs that are offered by the county can only cover very little according to the California Health Report (2011). The health programs will ensure only a fraction of eligible residents and according to UCLA School of Public Health an estimate of 68,000 people in the county lack health insurance (2011).

Mistrust

The U.S National Library of Medicine National Institution of Health states that Patients with high levels of health care-related distrust should be more likely to avoid health care, less likely to maintain continuity of care, and will more than likely monitor and verify their health care decisions. They also shared that distrust of the healthcare system is higher amongst individuals who do not have health insurance and individuals between 31 and 60 years old. Patients without healthcare insurance are more than likely to have a negative experience, will not continue their care and will continue to access low quality care that will continue the mistrust in the healthcare system.

Language Barriers

Another challenge is the lack of trained and qualified workers to assist the individuals who speak non-English languages. According to COVID-19 Pandemic disparate impact report (2020) a survey was conducted and stated in Monterey County, 29 percent of the population could be considered linguistically isolated and Spanish was the language most spoken by residents. There is a lack of oral and written communication. The Civil Rights Act states that limited English Proficient patients have the right to access quality of care based on their spoken language. (NCBI,2017). The health care system needs to ensure equal treatment of limited English speakers; it is their legal obligation to provide language services. Language barriers prevent residents from accessing services on resources, education and much more.

Consequences

Navigating Health Insurance

While not having access to health insurance is a big problem, navigating and searching for health insurance also affects the community members. Many of the community members get turned down, are directed elsewhere. This causes an ongoing cycle of having to contact and visit different medical centers and not receiving any help when trying to receive health care. Low income healthcare is so impacted that there is not enough care for everyone. The people who do receive low income services often have to face longer wait times and delays in care. NHIS found that in 2015, about 10 percent of people who were 18–64 years old had difficulty in accessing needed medical care, which included experiencing delays or not receiving needed care because of cost (NCBI, 2018) .

Received poor quality healthcare services

Low quality health care services due to overpopulated programs lead to a high increase of illnesses. Many community members have to wait weeks to be seen by a doctor due to a high and large population needing an appointment. Not having enough bilingual staff to help ensure the residents understand their conditions and medical needs play a big role in ensuring they are receiving good services.

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Lack of health insurance	Monterey County residents face barriers when accessing health and community resources	Shorter lifespan-obesity chronic illnesses
Language barriers		Navigating health insurance
Lack of community engagement		Receiving poor quality care
Mistrust		

Capstone Project Description and Justification**Capstone Project**

The interns capstone project will focus on analysing agencies and organizations struggles on providing resources to the community on accessing health and community resources such as accessing vaccines, doctors appointments and other health and community services.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to shed light on the needs of the Monterey County residents, to better serve the community members if another pandemic were to occur and for everyday services. The project aims to help reduce the language barriers, inform Monterey County on the needs of adding more services, and to help understand the barriers when accessing health care.

Project Justification

The purpose of creating a questionnaire to interview some of the agencies and organizations in Monterey County was to bring awareness to the barriers the residents face. The intern had the opportunity to provide services to the COVID-19 Call Center. The intern experiences a high number of calls from residents not having resources to access the internet and a computer to be able to get vaccinated. From March 23, 2020 through September 22nd, 2021 there were a total of 22432 calls 2952 were from Spanish speaking residents and 19408 English speaking residents according to the Monterey County Health Department COVID-19 Call Center dashboard. This information has shown how the majority of the calls were made by residents who spoke English, this information is important to keep in mind when reaching out to the residents. The low number of calls from spanish speaking were from lack of outreach or can of mistrust. The interview will help show the need for more community engagement with Monterey county residents.

Project Implementation

The intern will be interviewing Monterey County agencies and organizations to have an insight of their perspective and experience on serving Monterey County residents. The intern will also meet with them to share possible solutions to better serve the community. The intern will be asking how additional resources can be implemented to better serve the residents. Monterey

County professionals will share their overall experiences working in the community. The plan of implementation is to inform agencies and community members on the importance of community engagement, outreach and research before reaching out to the community..

Assessment Plan and Expected Outcome

Effectiveness will be measured by the feedback the interviewees give back to the intern. This will help the intern demonstrate the professionals experience on the needs of the community and where there is need for improvement. The intern will show the qualitative data the intern received by who the intern interviewed. The goal of this project is to improve the implementation of community outreach to help reduce the barriers community residents face when accessing health and community resources. The Intern hopes to learn about the challenges being faced when reaching out to a diverse population and their successes. The intern also hopes to hear that there are language barriers and lack of community engagement to better serve the community in the interviews. With the interns' findings they hope the Monterey County Health Department, Agencies and Organizations will be encouraged to do more community outreach, create connections and do research before reaching out to the community.

This project will help educate the Monterey County Health Department agencies and organizations on the needs of the community and help ensure that their needs are met. The intern will do this by interviewing Community Health Workers, Alliance on Aging, Communicable Disease Unit and many more organizations that work with the Monterey County residents. The intern will get a better understanding of the population being targeted, challenges and barriers faced when reaching out to the community, successes of the agencies and organizations and also their point of view on how they feel the Monterey County agencies and organizations can improve overall .

Project Results

The survey the intern developed was six questions that asked about their experience when working with the Monterey County residents. The questions the intern asked were The questions the intern ask were :

1. What barriers do you feel Monterey county residents face when accessing health and community resources and why ?
2. What are some challenges you have experienced in your work when connecting the community to health and community resources?
3. How have you been successful in your work with connecting the community to health and community resources?
4. What population does your agency/organization target? a. Do you feel your agency/organization is reaching diverse communities within that targeted population? Why or why not?
5. What do you think agencies and organizations can do to help Monterey county residents better access health and community resources?

The intern had the opportunity to first interview Angelica Chaves, the intern's mentor who is the Chronic Disease Prevention Coordinator at the Planning Evaluation and Policy Unit. Angelica Chavez shared her experience with the EnLace program to the Greenfield Community. This EnLACE program helps community members learn about leadership, and how local government decisions have an impact on the overall health in the community. This program was a 8 week program with a high attendance rate, Angelica shared that there was a diverse group of participants but that 75% of the participants were from Oaxaca. She noticed that the participants would ask some questions but were not very interactive. After the end of the 8 meetings Angelica went around and asked general questions, she noticed that those who participated didn't really understand what she was asking. She states that they were sitting in all these sessions and that EnLace would have been more effective and powerful if they were offered in Triki or

Misteco. The community enjoyed the 8 week program she states but how much did they really understand she questions herself. She wishes she had known about the language barriers before the 8 meetings to have had an interpreter.

She also shared that there was one individual in another project where she was teaching nutrition classes a fun workshop on healthy eating. She states that the participants had to participate in a written activity which would be considered for us simple basic writing. But there was one participant who was embarrassed to say that he didn't know how to read and write so he would say that he forgot his glasses. Angelica emphasized that community agencies and organizations and people who are out in the community need to understand that as we are out in the community, it is important to consider their literacy level in Spanish and in English. Angelica stated “ We think people are understanding because they are sitting there, being quiet and smiling but is our community really understanding or how can we make sure any information whether it's a workshop is accessible to them”. This plays an important role when providing services and information to the community.

Reyna Ross who works in Alliance on Aging in her interview shared the importance of building relationships with community members and knowing where to reach out to the target population. Her targeted population is Seniors and knowing her population she knows that the majority of them go to church. The Agency was incharge of scheduling the vaccines, when scheduling the community expressed that they don't have access to transportation, that they don't know how to speak English. There were many seniors who panicked and lived with fear because their safety was at risk. Reyna shared with the Intern her experience with a gentleman who lived in the rural areas of Greenfield, walks with a walker and is 80 years old, did not have transportation to receive a vaccine and when he finally had transportation they ran out. When

helping this gentleman Reyna had to explain to him a method of transportation, MST which is the Monterey Salinas Transit which is used for public transportation. He was unaware of what MST was, the acronym needed to be explained in order for him to understand, he knew it as the Blue Bus. He had used it before but was only familiar with one route, Reyna went above and beyond to help him get transportation, to get picked up and to take him back home. Reyna shared with the Intern on her success in getting him vaccinating despite the challenges. Alliance on Aging provided 826 appointments to be vaccinated in 3 days. Many seniors face many challenges and need people to advocate for them and go above and beyond. Their abilities diminish, the forms have letters and are hard to see, reading becomes a struggle and they are in need of extra assistance. Reyna shares that she is 70% successful and 30% not successful in helping a diverse group of people. She emphasized the importance of housing throughout Monterey county but the highest need for Seniors.

Jesus Garcia who works in the Communicable Disease Unit states that the barriers community residents face when accessing health and community resources are that there are a lot of community members struggling when navigating the healthcare system because they don't know how to. As a case manager at his previous position he had to advocate for the patients that meant helping call their medical provider, direct them to rent assistance programs, and do three way calls. Jesus explained the needs of a support system in the community but also the need of teaching them and explaining it so that they can become independent. He also states how community members can easily become misinformed from the internet. An example he gave was people who have diabetes not having to go to the doctor based on what they read on the internet. Jesus shares that some of his coworkers and he have experienced community members not wanting to open up to them or tell them what their needs are when saying that they are Monterey

County Employees he explained how that lack of trust also plays a big role in this. He emphasized the importance of connecting with the patient. He also experienced a community member being confused on his diagnosis, he explained how community partners don't have the staff to communicate with the patients with their preferred language. He states "It is important to be their support system, translating the right information is communicating across."

Guillermina and Maria are both Community Health Workers for the city of Gonzalez. Their role as community health workers is to help connect the community to community resources. Guillermina and Maria both expressed how their job positions have a strong impact in the community and how rewarding it has been. They feel that the community opens up to them because of the connections they have built over the past 9 years and also speaking the same language. Guillermina shares how the community feels comfortable asking questions and going to her for clarification and community resources available. She stated " gente como nosotros tenemos teléfono y computadoras y nos hemos comunicado por ahí pero la gente ocupa esa conexión humana". She shares that people like us can easily navigate an electronic device but the community needs the human connection. People need that trust and be welcomed when speaking to someone in the community. The community members are not gaining trust because of the language barriers. They are scared that there won't be a Spanish speaker to help them and don't want to struggle because of it. Guillermina would like to see more ways to deliver information, in the radio, flyers, in person, on the internet and through the mail. She also expressed the need to do research on the population and know what platform of communication they use. Their success when reaching out to the community has been making the community feel comfortable and safe. They have experienced many community members opening up to them about their

fears, lack of support and struggles accessing resources. Maria shared that there are many community members who have felt unheard in the clinics and that there are overpopulated resources which have made community members feel hopeless. She expressed the need for workers to have patience when explaining to the community their next tasks or when filling out a form to get resources. Maria emphasized that in her experience many workers don't understand the community's literacy level so they become frustrated with them for not understanding. Maria explains that this is what causes many community members not to get resources.

Conclusion & Recommendations

There is a large population in Monterey County that have been struggling with receiving health and community resources because of lack of involvement in the population they are serving. It is important for agencies and organizations to be aware of the literacy level, language preferences and disabilities to ensure the community residents are receiving the services they deserve. This can be done by introducing the agencies first before starting or implementing the project, handing out surveys or talking to the community by being present in events to help build connection and trust. Agencies and organizations can partner with a program or agencies that are from their targeted population to gain that trust. If the community is involved with the program, they already have that trust therefore there is a high chance that the community will trust the organization and agency because of the connections they already have with the program. Understanding the community members literacy level before handing out flyers and making presentations will strengthen the connection and information that will be getting across. The engagement can also strengthen the trust between the community and agencies once they know

that they are there to help and support them. This can mean having interpreters, having more visuals in presentations and more human interaction.

Personal Reflection

Living in Monterey County my whole life I have experienced the lack of bilingual staff, overcrowded clinics and not receiving health and community resources nor knowing where to go for those resources. Whenever my parents were directed to those resources there was always more than one question and it was never really clear to them how to receive those resources. It was very interesting to see and learn from community agencies and organizations on what they struggle with when it comes to reaching out to the community and what their successes were. I learned that although agencies and organizations work so hard to inform the residents it may not always be the right method. There might be some things to consider and some adjustments to do such as making sure there are interpreters and visuals for those who need that additional assistance to understand.

I learned that when developing an interview there has to be a flow in the questions that are being asked that there needs to be a lot of thought in finding the right questions, and figuring out who will be interviewed. I have yet to interview many people but I know that I will have great answers to my questions as everyone seems excited to participate in the interview.

Personal/professional growth: Discuss what you learned about the problem, issue or need addressed by the project, the planning and implementation of it, and contributions the project made to the agency in its efforts to address the identified problem, issue or need. The challenges I faced was creating my capstone project, there was a lot going on with COVID-19 and different

projects that were going on at the same time which made it difficult to focus and find a topic and information to work with. Therefore, I decided to address the overall barriers in health and community resources.

This issue goes beyond the Monterey County Health Department, this problem is seen in school, workplaces and programs offered in the community. The connection and the community outreach is important to build that connection and ensure services are being provided and understood. Something more that I could have done is talked to community members to see how they feel, I could have developed a survey to get their input and their needs so that they know that they are being heard and needs need to be addressed. I myself could have built a connection with a group of residents to make that connection.

Some advice that I would benefit future capstone students working in my agency for this type of project would be to have fun and ensure it is something that will get you excited to do. It will help you learn a lot about yourself as to where you want to work, what are your strongest suits and where there are needs for improvement. Also to not overthink it, that everything will be okay.

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Appendix

Scope of Work

Scope of Work Template (<i>Sample phases, activities, deliverables, timeline</i>)							
Title: The Need for Health and Community Resources in Monterey County Interview							
Project description: Bringing awareness to Monterey County Agencies and Organizations to deliver their resources knowing their audience							
Goal: Encourage Agencies and Organizations to do research and build connections with community members.							
The primary objective of the project: To bring awareness and effective outreach to the Monterey County residence.							
Project Timeline: April 2020- December 2020							
Activities	April	May	June	September	October	November	December
Research on the Monterey County Health Department	X	X					
Create presentations on community engagement		X					
Participate in County meetings	X	X	X				
Research on the Monterey County Demographics	X	X	X				
Became a Covid-19 Agent		X	X				
Created Interview questions				X	X		
Created list of Agencies and Organizations to interview					X	X	
Emailed and scheduled Agencies and					X	X	

Organizations for interview							
Completed a draft of the findings							X
Prepared capstone project through a panel format							X
Final preparation for Capstone Festival							X