

Partnership with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes: Establishing an Advisory Committee for Pharmacogenetic Research

Chelsea T. Morales¹, LeeAnna I. Muzquiz², Kevin Howlett², Bernie Azure³, Brenda Bodnar³, Vernon Finley³, Tony Incashola³, Cheryl Mathias³, Cindi Laukes⁴, Patrick Beatty⁴, Wylie Burke⁵, Mark A. Pershous¹, Elizabeth A. Putnam¹, Susan Brown Trinidad⁵, Rosalina James⁵, Erica L. Woodahl^{1,4}

(1) Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Montana; (2) Tribal Health Department, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; (3) Community Pharmacogenetics Advisory Council, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; (4) Montana Cancer Institute Foundation; (5) Department of Bioethics and Humanities, University of Washington

What Is the Purpose of this Study?

- To describe the academic-partnership in Montana within the Northwest-Alaska Pharmacogenomics Research Network to study pharmacogenetics with American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities.
- To detail a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to engage the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in pharmacogenetic research, including the formation of a community advisory committee, the Community Pharmacogenetics Advisory Council (CPAC).
- To share reflections from interviews with researchers, clinicians, and CPAC members about their participating in the pharmacogenetic partnership.

What Is the Problem?

- Pharmacogenetics—understanding the genetic basis for differences in drug response—has the potential to improve drug therapy; however, many underserved populations have been left out of pharmacogenetic research, including AI/AN populations.
- Mistrust among AI/AN communities toward academic research is an important barrier to conducting pharmacogenetic research.
- AI/AN communities have advocated for a CBPR model for research because it facilitates their participation in and oversight of the research process.

What Are the Findings?

- A productive academic–community partnership has been created to build a foundation for pharmacogenetic research that is mutually beneficial to both the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Northwest-Alaska Pharmacogenomics Research Network.
- Interactions between researchers and the CPAC have helped to develop bidirectional expertise, provide community oversight, and ensure that the interests of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes are prioritized.
- CPAC and researcher interviews showed positive feedback regarding the development of the partnership.
- The CPAC has helped to increase community knowledge, involvement, and engagement in pharmacogenetics research and provided the CPAC with tools to have informed discussions about the research project.
- CBPR engagement activities have also helped to guide researchers in a culturally sensitive direction.

Who Should Care Most?

- AI/AN and other underserved communities interested in health research.
- Academic researchers interested in engaging communities in health research.
- Community leaders and healthcare providers.

Recommendations for Action

- Communities interested in participating in pharmacogenetic or other health research should consider implementing CBPR principles to ensure the research is of interest to their communities and that there is oversight of the research processes.
- Researchers may consider this approach as a model to working with AI/AN and other underserved communities.