

A Community–Academic Partnership to Explore and Address Cancer Disparities in Southwest Chicago Arab Americans

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What Is the Purpose of This Study?

- This study was led by a community–academic partnership between a community-based organization, the Arab American Family Services, and academic researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago.
- The purpose of this study was to co-create a strategic plan for a community-based program to address cancer-related needs in the Arab American community in Chicago.

What Is the Problem?

- Despite the growing literature on community engagement approaches in health research, few studies have documented the process by which different sources of data are integrated and how decisions are made.

What Are the Findings?

- The study included three phases: 1) eight focus groups with 48 Arab American community members, 2) a literature review to identify existing cancer programs implemented with Arab Americans, and 3) discussions between community and academic partners to integrate data from focus groups and the literature and develop a strategic plan for a community-based cancer program administered by the community partner.
- Focus groups discussions clarified community members' attitudes and beliefs across the stages of cancer control (e.g., misconceptions related to cancer screening, cancer fatalism) and the literature review highlighted two existing cancer programs with Arab Americans.
- In consensus-building discussions, community and academic partners co-developed a strategic plan for a community-based cancer program that is informed by the Arab American Family Services' goals and capacity.

Who Should Care Most?

- Partners involved in community-engaged research: this study provides an example of a participatory process by which community and academic data can be integrated.
- Researchers engaged in community-based participatory research with Arab community partners.

Recommendations for Action

- Take the time to build an equitable partnership with community partners, especially those representing marginalized community groups (e.g., Arab Americans).

- A community–academic partnership is a feasible approach to identify local health priorities and develop locally responsive interventions.
- Consider *THIQAT* (*trust*, in Arabic), when engaging with Arab community partners: Trust (establish and maintain trust); Heed (listen to community partners); Involve (sustain community partners’ participation); eQuity (ground partnership goals and dynamics in equity); Action (commit to translating research findings into action); and Transparency (be transparent about your biases, goals, and expectations).