



Hearing health training builds capacity for Community Health Workers in the U.S.

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Introduction:

In many areas of health in the U.S., Community Health Workers (CHWs) serve as a link between patients and the formal health care system.

CHWs help reduce barriers to care for low-resource populations by facilitating access to culturally-appropriate health services. They build individual and community capacity through outreach, advocacy, community education, social support and informal counseling.¹

Despite the longstanding role of CHWs in disease prevention and health promotion across numerous health care fields, there is limited evidence of collaboration with CHWs and the field of audiology in the U.S.^{2,3}

Preliminary evidence shows CHWs have potential for promoting hearing health among low-resource communities.²

Purpose: We present data on two educational workshops conducted in Arizona aimed at improving CHW knowledge of hearing loss and hearing health care services.

Methods

- Workshops were created in response to a request from the Arizona Community Health Workers' Association (AZCHOW) to provide trainings on hearing loss.
- Curricula was expanded from prior trainings² and was adapted to align with proposed national CHW core competencies (Table 1).⁴
- Pre- and post-questionnaires were administered before and immediately following the workshops to evaluate knowledge gained.

Methods & Selected Results:

Workshop 1

Format

- Workshop took place over two days (eight hours total) at a community center in Douglas, Arizona in October, 2016. Presentation was conducted in Spanish, based on the attendees' preference.
- Included hands-on activities (e.g. video otoscopy) to improve knowledge of hearing health care, and role playing to improve motivational interviewing techniques with clients who have hearing loss.

Participants
Seven CHWs were recruited by AZCHOW from the Arizona/Mexico border region to receive training.

Selected Results

Correctly identified at least two indicators the client has hearing loss:	
Pre-test	Post-test
2 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants

Confident connecting clients with hearing health care services:	
Pre-test	Post-test
2 out of 7 participants	7 out of 7 participants

Workshop 2

Format

- Two-hour workshop at the annual AZCHOW conference in Tucson, AZ in July, 2017. Presentation in English based on the majority of attendees' preference. Written materials in Spanish and English.
- Included a breakout small group activity: a case study involving a client who may have hearing loss. Participants reported back on strategies to improve communication, and appropriate referral sources.

Participants
78 participants from cities across the State of Arizona who attended the AZCHOW annual conference. (74 completed pre/post surveys).

Selected Results

Confident in ability to talk to clients and their families about hearing loss:	
Pre-test	Post-test
39 out of 74 participants	74 out of 74 participants

Confident connecting clients with hearing health care services:	
Pre-test	Post-test
37 out of 74 participants	63 out of 74 participants

Conclusion & Future Directions

Previous preliminary evidence from our research group showed that CHWs who have undergone trainings to improve knowledge on hearing health care may be more likely to be more effective service connectors and advocates for individuals with hearing loss.³

The current study adds to this body of research. CHWs who participated in workshops on hearing health demonstrated increased self efficacy for helping clients and families with hearing loss and increased knowledge of hearing health resources.

Future research will explore strategies for adapting workshops for CHWs who work with different populations of clients (e.g. children) and with clients who have additional chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes).

Aligning curricula with national CHW core competencies may aid in generalizability of workshop material.

Collaborating with the CHW workforce may help improve awareness of hearing health care and connection to providers in low resource areas.

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Table 1. Workshop learning objectives (below) matched to Community Health Worker national core competencies ⁴ (right)	Communication	Interpersonal Skills	Knowledge Base	Service Coordination	Capacity Building	Advocacy	Teaching	Organizational Skills
Increase knowledge on how to identify and refer individuals with possible hearing loss.			✓					
Increase empathy and awareness for hearing loss.		✓				✓		
Increase comfort providing support, education and referrals for individuals with hearing loss and their families.				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Increase skills communicating one-on-one and in groups among clients with hearing loss.	✓	✓			✓			