With Every Heartbeat is Life: A Heart Health Prevention Program in African American Congregations

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Knowledge that will change your world

Introduction

With Every Heartbeat is Life (WEHIL) is a heart health curriculum designed by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) specifically for African American audiences. The UAB Center for the Study of Community Health (COSH) was one of 10 Strategic Champions for Heart Health awarded funds by the Altarum Institute to train Community Health Workers (CHWs) to deliver the culturally relevant heart health curriculum to their communities. CSCH worked with community partner Conferences for Public Health to train CHWs, known as Neighborhood Outreach Specialists ("NOSeys"), on the curriculum and provide assistance as they delivered the curriculum to their congregations. A total of 11 NOSeys were trained in two phases and delivered the curriculum to 124 congregations.

Topic Areas

- Session 1: Knowledge is Power: Know Your Risk for Heart Disease
- Session 2: Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs
- Session 3: Get Energized! Say YES to Physical Activity
- Session 4: Help Your Heart: Control Your High Blood Pressure
- Session 5: Be Heart Smart: Keep Your Cholesterol in Check
- Session 6: Embrace Your Health! Aim for a Healthy Weight
- Session 7: Protect Your Heart: Take Good Care of Your Diabetes for Life
- Session 8: Make Heart Healthy Eating an Everyday Family Reunion
- Session 9: Eat in a Heart Healthy Way—Even When Time or Money Is Tight
- Session 10: Take Control of Your Health: Enjoy Living Smoke Free
- Session 11: Review and Graduation

Phases

- University of Alabama at Birmingham/AMC Center for the Study of Community Health
- With Every Heartbeat is Life Training
- Community Health Worker training
- Community Education
- Congregation
- Evaluation and Results

Summary

Knowledge Gain

Knowledge gain was measured by 21 knowledge-based questions pertaining to key curriculum themes and facts. Overall scores showed a significant increase in knowledge in pre-to-post test. For each question, a paired t-test was utilized to determine if changes in knowledge were considered statistically significant, meaning there is 95% probability that results reflect actual change and cannot be explained by chance. The following chart provides the percentage of participants who correctly answered the question on the pre-test and post-test for all items with a statistically significant result.

Behavioral Change

The pre-/post-test also assessed the frequency with which participants engage in positive and negative health habits that are addressed in the curriculum. The pre-/post-test assessed the frequency (Never/Almost Never, Sometimes, Most of the Time, All of the Time) of 10 positive and 7 negative health behaviors. It should be noted that some instances where the increase is not significant may be due to the fact that many people were already practicing the healthy habit, leaving no room for significant change.

Participant Behavior Change: Positive Behaviors

Overall, the number of participants almost/always engaging in positive behaviors significantly increased from pre-test to post-test. Results are provided for each question below:

Participant Behavior Change: Negative Behaviors

As a whole, the number of participants almost/always engaging in negative behaviors significantly decreases for pre-test to post-test. Please note, a decrease in negative behaviors is the intended result and indicates program success. Results are provided for each question below:

Social Network Analysis

At the end of the program (July 31, 2013), UAB conducted an online survey of the 11 CHWs to inform a social network analysis describing how relationships formed and grew over the course of the project. Each CHW was asked to complete the survey and rate their relationships with each of the other CHWs and pastors of each of the participating churches, both before and after participating in the project, on a scale of 0 (no relationship) to 4 (strong relationship). The results below show a much more developed network and more interaction among denominations.

References

Adaptations also available for the following audiences:
- Honoring the Gift of Heart Health (American Indian, Alaska Native)
- Healthy Heart, Healthy Family (Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander)
- Your Heart, Your Life/Su Corazon, Su Vida (Latino/Hispanic)

Other NHLBI Resources

- Charting New Directions for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Control in the Americas: A joint NHLBI/CANSA Workshop
- Educational Resources to Address Health Disparities
- Latino Cardiovascular Health Resources
- The Heart Truth for Women
- We Can!—A Way to Enhance Children’s Activity and Nutrition

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Payne Chapel AME Church
St John AME Church
Sunbelt Christian Episcopal Church of Jesus