Bridging Academia and Communities: A Skill–Building Course in Community-Based Participatory Research

Selina A Mohammed, PhD, MPH, RN

There is increasing recognition of the need for more comprehensive and participatory approaches to research when working with communities to address health issues. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is one approach that equitably involves all partners (e.g., universities and communities) in each phase of the research process. As students increasingly collaborate with communities, it is important to offer pedagogy that provides students with knowledge and skills necessary for creating effective partnerships and participating in community-based research.

This poster represents the development of a 10-week course on CBPR that introduces core principles, concepts, and strategies involved in using this approach. In addition, class participants will gain an understanding of the historical and theoretical perspectives from which CBPR has evolved; partnership formation, maintenance, and evaluation; roles and values of partners; how CBPR has been implemented in a variety of health-related projects; how to design and use various research methods in alignment with a CBPR approach; interpretation, dissemination, and application of CBPR project results; benefits and challenges associated with using a CBPR approach; and skills necessary for successfully engaging with communities and conducting CBPR projects. Pedagogical approaches will include lectures, group discussions, case studies, and small group exercises that focus on building skills and incorporate role-playing.

In addition to supporting students’ academic growth and community engagement skills, there are numerous, multifaceted, long-term advantages of this course for students and communities. Given the often negative historical context of research conducted in communities, CBPR is considered to be a respectful approach to research because of its emphasis on greater community power and decision-making. Students from this course who eventually undertake a CBPR project and immerse themselves in communities will be able to build upon local knowledge and strengths to enhance the quality of research, increase sustainability, and generate outcomes that are relevant to the needs of each community.