

AIM Webinar: Partnering with Community Health Workers (CHWs) to Increase Vaccine Confidence

10/4/2021

Disclaimer: These notes were taken by AIM staff who observed the meeting. These are not official notes provided by the webinar presenters.

Big Take-aways/Lessons Learned:

- CHWs have been working to improve community health for over 60 years; CHWs are trusted messengers, advocates, and educators and provide a bridge between health care providers, scientists, researchers, and community members
- CHWs are integral to the COVID-19 pandemic response and can help increase equity through a myriad of ways including: material development, screening and navigating of social and health services, navigating technology and other barriers to ensure access to vaccines, coordinating testing and vaccination, and engaging with community members who have additional needs like those who are home-bound, experiencing homelessness, etc.
- CHWs face similar systemic barriers to the people they serve; as CHWs often come from the same community as the people they work with
- Much value is paid to formal education and training in the U.S. vs. lived and on-the-job experience. CHWs have historically faced barriers in the recognition of their work from health care and public health systems
- Language and communication are two important considerations; immunization programs (IPs), government, non-profits, health care systems and community organizations, must partner with CHWs to develop and create materials, resources, and share information in a bi-directional manner to provide in-the-moment, accurate information that CHWs can bring back to their communities
- Information must be culturally and linguistically accurate; CHWs know their communities best and understand the cultural norms and nuances of their members
- There must be long-term support, resources, authentic partnership, and integration of CHWs into our systems of care; **Respect – Protect- and Partner with CHWs!**

Highlights from Speaker Presentations

Alma Galván, Migrant Clinicians Network

- Community Health Workers have been around for decades starting in 1949 with the Chinese revolution and the idea of the “barefoot doctors”; then in 1950-1970’s in Latin America with the teachings of Paulo Freire around liberation theology; the idea and role of CHWs were brought to the United States in the 1980’s with farmworker communities
- CHWs have been working in the U.S. on a variety of preventative programs with chronic diseases, non-communicable diseases and now with the COVID-19 pandemic
- CHWs have been incorporated in the U.S. as part of the “health care team”
- CHWs play a lot of different roles and have many functions: health educator, outreach advocate, case worker. Within each of these roles they are opinion leaders. Making a bridge between what

doctors and scientists are saying and what people need to know or learn. Taking complex information and making it more accessible for people

- According to [APHA](#) “community health workers generate individual capabilities in people; improve the capabilities of the community and institutions”
- CHWs work with many individuals who are not authorized to work (undocumented) in the U.S. These communities are often afraid to access services and specifically health care; often do not have health insurance. There is a high level of stress and health and mental health issues and needs
- Systemic barriers that CHWs and the communities that they serve face:
- In addition to work working with undocumented immigrants, some CHWs are undocumented themselves, so there may be barriers to paying them; other barriers include the recognition by the health care system regarding their experience; much attention/importance is paid to formal education/training in the U.S. and less on the idea of on-the-job experience
- Language idiosyncrasies; CHWs must convey important and complex information to their communities and don't just “translate”; it is important to work with CHWs and train/educate them to be able to better communicate information utilizing the important social conditions, customs and values they bring and that their community will understand and trust.
- CHWs are trusted messengers that can really make a difference in their communities and the U.S. as a whole!

Denise Smith, Executive Director, National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW)

- CHWs are integral as a frontline workforce in achieving health equity and social justice; during early part of the pandemic when the federal government began talking about the need for a robust public health response there lacked a well-coordinated and well-resourced community response
- Community Health Workers are centered on the word community; CHWs come from the community, are endorsed by the community, lift-up and are well aware of community assets. CHWs can bridge community barriers because they speak the language of the community and share the lived experience of the community
- There is over 60 years of documented and demonstrated evidence of the effectiveness of CHWs on community health! CHWs have a national labor classification through the National Department of Labor and many states have invested in building training programs that include CHWs to preserve community health.
- However, the CHWs profession still languishes for lack of a professional identify and lack of sustainable funding to fully integrate into clinical and community service
- CHWs are usually women of color who share the ethnicity, the diagnoses, the socioeconomic status, and the geography with the communities they serve; CHWs are disproportionately affected by inequities; often experiencing the same barriers to the social determinants of health as those marginalized communities where they live and serve
- It was no surprise to CHWs that when the pandemic began, the communities most impacted were people from communities already impacted by poverty and illness. Instead of being integrated into the pandemic response (in the beginning), CHWs were being laid off
- Important that CHWs have access to information and that you authentically partner with CHWs
- **CHWs can help increase equity in COVID-19 pandemic through: (directly from slides)**
 - CHWs can co-design, develop, distribute and evaluate materials and strategies that appropriately respond to community health beliefs, misinformation and cultural concerns.
 - CHWs can coordinate and administer screenings for food, housing, financial needs and mental health services and help people navigate to or directly access these services.

- CHWs can navigate technology, literacy, language, enrollment and transportation barriers to ensure access to vaccines, emergency services and health care coverage.
- CHWs can coordinate mobile testing and vaccination sites, organize tabling and registrations, collect data and monitor symptoms, and engage home-bound, house-less and transient community members.

Venus Ginés, President/Founder of Día de la Mujer Latina

- Throughout the pandemic, there has been much misinformation about COVID-19 and the vaccine; this information is spread online, through social media and taken back to communities and their families. It is important to dispel myths, fact check information and their sources and provide accurate information to the community
- Anti-vaxxers use storytelling to spread misinformation
 - CHWs also utilize storytelling in their work. It's important to develop training materials in multiple languages so CHWs can utilize accurate and factual information for their work with community members!
- Language is key; words and how they are translated are imperative; especially related to consent forms (example: the term for "clinical trial" can mean "experiment" if literally translated);
 - Urge IPs to review forms and make sure to use accurate and culturally / linguistically appropriate language at an accessible reading level and ensure translation is using [CLAS standards](#)
 - It's important communications is culturally and linguistically tailored and provided by trusted messengers
- Ensure when there is "breaking news" about the pandemic or vaccines that information gets back to CHWs in a time sensitive manner; so that news can be shared back to the community in a timely way.
- When talking to vaccine hesitant people, be respectful; guide them instead of telling them what to do
- Be mindful of the inequities in our society, racism and discrimination faced by community members and CHWs
- Engage CHWs when developing materials, information, resources, etc. ; CHWs know what will work in their community

Shared Resources

NACHW

- [NACHW blog 5/6/2020 "To Strengthen the Public Health Response to COVID-19, We Need Community Health Workers"](#)
- [Top COVID-19 Resources for CHWs](#) and [Community Health Workers Strengthen COVID-19 Response](#)
- [Advancing CHW Engagement in COVID-19 Response Strategies: A Playbook for Local Health Department Strategies in the United States](#)
- [Vaccine Equity Cooperative](#)
- [Checklist for Administrators, Managers, and Clinicians to Integrate CHWs in Vaccine Outreach, Acceptance and Distribution Strategies](#)
- [NACHW Policy Platform](#)