Who Benefits from Research?: Community Engagement and Enhancing Capacity Throughout the Research Process

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CANHelp Working Group

• The CANHelp Working Group is an interdisciplinary team that formed to respond to concerns voiced by residents of some northern Indigenous communities about health risks from H. pylori infection.
• The group conducts community H. pylori projects.
• The group aims to produce collaboratively generated knowledge for informing culturally appropriate health policy recommendations to reduce associated health risks.

CANHelp Working Group Offices at the UoFA

H. pylori Infection

• H. pylori is a bacterium known to cause digestive diseases worldwide although occurrence varies by socioeconomic status.
• In 2012, the CANHelp Working Group estimated the prevalence to be 59% in Fort McPherson.
• H. pylori infection produces inflammation of the stomach lining, which is often asymptomatic. Chronic cases may lead to peptic ulcers, and in rare instances, stomach cancer.

Community-Driven Research

• Local research activities are guided by the Fort McPherson H. pylori Project planning committee, comprised of community residents.
• Planning committee members expressed a preference for research that engages youth and provides opportunities for capacity building.

Students Engage in Research Skills Training

Workshops held with students at Chief Julius School provided educational and practical training in:
• Basic Digital Photography
• Photo Literacy
• Photo Analysis
• Ethnographic Research
• Writing Skills

Students Visit the University of Alberta

Three student workshop participants were selected to travel to Edmonton to visit our offices and labs in order to:
• Meet with CANHelp Working Group researchers and learn about how research is conducted after scientists leave the community.
• Take part in hands-on activities to learn about how microbiology research is done in our labs.
• Observe the clinical work of a gastroenterologist at the University of Alberta Hospital.
• Take part in two conferences held on campus to share project outcomes and disseminate results.
• Connect with Aboriginal student groups on campus.
• Tour other postsecondary institutions in Edmonton.

In Their Own Words:

Students from Chief Julius School comment on their experience visiting the University of Alberta:

Jayda Andre, Edmonton Trip Student Chaperone

"Without coming here, I don’t think I would have had the opportunity to tour NAIT, MacEwan, and the UoA and see the programs they have. I am interested in a career in health, so I am looking forward to learning about that. I don’t know for sure what I want to do, so I am hoping to get some ideas about that while I’m here too." - Jayda Andre, Student at Chief Julius School

“Bringing us people together is important. You guys are here and we are there. All learning together and getting closer to each other. Learning about something in a group and as a family. If not for this group, I would have never thought of going to school after high school.”

Frazer Andre, Student at Chief Julius School

“The only reason I went on this trip is because I wanted to know what H. pylori is and lots of people said that my auntie had it once which I didn’t know about. I never had a chance to ask her, so I wanted to know and get together and learn about it.”

Jaydee Akiie, Student at Chief Julius School

In Their Own Words:

Academic Collaborators

“A flexible approach to research design that incorporates learning from one another and allows for the scope of the project to evolve in response to priorities identified by different collaborators, while perhaps unconventional, has proven invaluable. The students largely determined the focus based on what they identified as significant or important for answering the research questions.”

Megan Highet, Principal Investigator

“I love the idea that we can learn from each other through these partnerships. It’s an honour to witness how community and researcher knowledge of public health topics is strengthened through the openness and mutual respect knowledge exchange approaches such as these demonstrate. Knowing that we are working together to find solutions to public health problems is a great feeling.”

Amy Colquhoun, PhD Student, School of Public Health

“Working with youth is a transformative experience. You get a glimpse into their lived realities and are able to work together to build a program with them that has meaningful impact.”

Megan Lukasewich, Fieldwork Coordinator, CANHelp Working Group

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