Unlocking Oral Health Equity

Connecting Coverage and Care through Community Health Workers

Christie Lumsden, PhD, MS, RD, CDN
Introduction

• Associate Research Scientist
• PhD and MPhil in Behavioral Nutrition (2013)
• Registered Dietitian and NYS Certified Dietitian-Nutritionist (2010)
• MS in Nutrition Education (2009)
• Engaged in behavioral intervention research to reduce oral health disparities in children
“The mouth is the window to all the diseases of the body”

Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General
Oral health is Essential for Overall Health

Poor oral health is associated with:

• Increased use of medical services
• Increased risk for chronic conditions, including heart disease and diabetes
• Reduced quality of life
• Limited employment opportunities
• Lost work/school time and lost wages
Health Disparities

• Unequal distribution of health/disease across populations

• Most health disparities affect groups marginalized because of:
  - socioeconomic status
  - disability status
  - race/ethnicity
  - geographic location
  - sexual orientation
  - gender
  or some combination of these

• Health disparities represent health inequalities

Healthy People 2020 Definition of Health Disparities

“…a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with economic, social, or environmental disadvantage.

Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater social or economic obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, age, or mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.”
Understanding Health Equity

Social Justice in Health

• No one should be denied the opportunity to be healthy for belonging to a historically economically or socially disadvantaged group

• Everyone should have the opportunity to attain their full health potential

• No one should be disadvantaged because of socially determined circumstance
Everyone gets the same thing vs. everyone gets the same opportunity

Equality doesn’t mean Equity

http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/health-equity/
Drivers of Oral Health Inequities

- Limited access to dental care providers
  - Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)
- Lack of culturally and linguistically competent providers
- High cost of dental insurance and services
- Poor oral health literacy, limited knowledge of disease and prevention
- Limited access to transportation, childcare, paid time off
- Unhealthy food environments
  - Abundance of high-fat/sugar foods; limited fresh fruits/vegetables
- Competing demands – health, housing, social, legal challenges, etc.

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The CHW Connection

Community Health Workers (CHWs) extend the reach of healthcare providers.

CHWs:

• Are seen as peers, sharing cultural, linguistic, racial/ethnic backgrounds
• Meet people where they are, in home and community settings
• Provide an essential link to social services (housing, food, legal, insurance, etc.)
• Provide health education
• Help families navigate complex health systems
Overarching Aim

To stop caries progression in affected children and reduce their risk of future decay
Approach

Shifting from **dental care** to **oral health**

Parents can stop decay by partnering with CHWs to understand the disease process and take action to reduce risk through diet and daily fluoride use.
An iPad-based family-level intervention that:

- Seeks to eradicate early childhood caries
- Targets two primary disease mediators: Diet and Oral Hygiene
- Designed to be delivered by lay health workers in the community

https://vimeo.com/114512516

Password: smile
MySmileBuddy supports engagement between CHWs and families through:

1. Parent Engagement, Education, and Training
2. Oral health risk assessment (including dietary risk)
3. Individualized risk score analysis
4. Family-specific goal setting
5. Family-designed action planning
6. Wrap-around support
## Participant Experience Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Rating (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My CHW ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was warm/friendly</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was easy to talk to</td>
<td>99.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was helpful/caring</td>
<td>98.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explained things in a way I could understand</td>
<td>97.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listened to me carefully</td>
<td>99.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treated me with courtesy/respect</td>
<td>99.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spent enough time with me</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>did everything she could to help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me feel comfortable</td>
<td>98.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped me reach my goal</td>
<td>98.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

98.9% would Recommend the Program
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Thank you