

Abstract

Community-based approach in food distribution and communication networks

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Introduction

Food insecurity is a persistent barrier to health in Houston's Third Ward community. Several community-based organizations are working to address nutritional needs in the area, but, according to community partners, lack of data sharing and coordination are major challenges to the efficiency of local food distribution. In response, an academic and community partnership was formed to assess how food is distributed and identify best practices in coordinating food distribution for the Third Ward.

Methods

A novel, mixed approach of community-based participatory research (CBPR) and rapid review methodologies was used to incorporate the knowledge of the community. Numerous meetings were held over eight months, and they informed various inclusion and exclusion criteria in the rapid review. Community partners assessed all results for relevancy to their needs.

Results

A contrast between community needs and best practices in the literature emerged. The authors identified five technical applications and theoretical communication models from the literature. Cultural and logistical interventions, such as staffing, were the primary needs prioritized by the community; these needs were not found in the literature.

Discussion

This gap in the literature led the authors to develop recommendations that integrate the community's priorities and best practices from the literature: (1) support the development of a community culture surrounding food, (2) establish regular meetings with food distribution and community partners, and (3) develop an internal and external network of nonprofits and vendors for logistical support. Insights were gained into the importance of developing a methodology that equitably connects academic and community institutions.

Communication and informatics Public health or related research Systems thinking models (conceptual and theoretical models), applications related to public health