

Hawaii Community Focus Groups Determine Priorities for Oral Health Research

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Abstract

Background: The oral health status of people in Hawaii is poor and possibly the worst in the nation. However, comprehensive oral epidemiological studies have not been done. The presence of many ethnic groups, blending of ethnicities and the lack of universal water fluoridation may contribute to this situation.

Objective: To determine the community's and provider's perception of the problem of oral health and their priorities for further research.

Methods: Eight one-hour focus groups (10 people) were held in 5 communities to explore the oral health perceptions of community members and providers. Hawaiian, Filipino, Chinese, and other Pacific Island populations were studied. The groups were language and culturally sensitive and attentive to the needs and health status of the participants and the communities they represented. Sessions were audio taped and analyzed using SPSS TextSmart to generate major themes.

Results: Major themes were: attitudes, beliefs, oral health behaviors, genetic factors, and access to services contribute to the oral health status of the community. Agreement exists across cultures that community based oral health research studies focused on tangible oral health problems, including intervention trials, are appropriate strategies to address oral health concerns. Community involvement in the design and the implementation of oral health investigations in Hawaii is essential.

Conclusions: The Hawaiian, Filipino, Chinese, and other Pacific Island populations studied share the belief that research focused on oral health services to the community is crucial to the reduction in oral health disease, as well as in reaching the goal of eliminating health disparities in oral health, which is known to exist among population subgroups in Hawaii.

Problem

- The oral health status of people in Hawaii is poor and possibly the worst in the nation. However, comprehensive oral epidemiological studies have not been done.
- The presence of many ethnic groups, blending of ethnicities and the lack of universal water fluoridation may contribute to this situation

Objective

To determine the community's and provider's perception of the problem of oral health and their priorities for further research.

Methods

- Eight one-hour focus groups (10 people) were held in 5 communities to explore the oral health perceptions of community members and providers.
- Hawaiian, Filipino, Chinese, and other Pacific Island populations were studied.
- The groups were language and culturally sensitive and attentive to the needs and health status of the participants and the communities they represented.
- Sessions were audio taped
- SPSS TextSmart was used to generate major themes.
- “Speakouts” were used to validate themes

Results

- Major themes were: attitudes, beliefs, oral health behaviors, genetic factors, and access to services contribute to the oral health status of the community.
- Agreement exists across cultures that community based oral health research studies focused on tangible oral health problems, including intervention trials, are appropriate strategies to address oral health concerns.
- Community involvement in the design and the implementation of oral health investigations in Hawaii is essential.

Communities believe

Individual

- Increased individual responsibility is needed
- Provision of tooth brushes, floss and tooth paste to community members would be assistive and “cheap”

Communities need

- Economic Development
- Housing
- Educational Programs
- Professional
- Dentists need to provide more “pain free” care
- The dental profession should take on increased responsibility for the community
- Dentists may need to be provided with incentives to work in communities with health disparities

Education

- Programs should be implemented to teach community members how to raise healthy food because it is too expensive to buy
- Nutrition education is needed
- Provide technical assistance and training

Political

- Legislation is needed to change availability of Dental Insurance

- It is time that health insurance covered the mouth

Family

- Provide support for the “ohana”

Community

- Provide dental services in the community health centers
- Develop community leaders

Environment

- Reduce pesticide use
- Study watershed
- Study sewage ejection into the ocean

Conclusions

The Hawaiian, Filipino, Chinese, and other Pacific Island populations studied share the belief that research focused on oral health services to the community is crucial to the reduction in oral health disease as well as in reaching the goal of eliminating health disparities in oral health.

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