

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF A COMMUNITY-ENGAGED STRATEGY TO REACH UNDERREPRESENTED AND UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS IN ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA

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Abstract

BACKGROUND

HealthStreet is a new initiative of the University of Florida Department of Epidemiology, utilizing a community-engaged approach which actively works to link underrepresented and medically underserved populations in Alachua County to research opportunities at the University of Florida through daily outreach activities. In order to monitor the real-time health problems and concerns of these populations, Community Health Workers (CHWs) travel throughout the community administering Health Intake assessments to those who provide Informed Consent, capturing both reported health conditions and concerns of the respondent.

AIMS

This analysis aims to describe the population seen both in the field and on-site at HealthStreet from the months of November 2011 to February 2012, and compare this early sample with census data for Alachua County in order to preliminarily assess the representativeness of HealthStreet's newly implemented community-engaged strategy. I hypothesize that HealthStreet data will differ from census data in ways that allow the organization to address underrepresentation issues common to research studies. Furthermore, data will be analyzed by ZIP code to examine variability within Alachua County, thereby facilitating and informing future HealthStreet outreach efforts.

METHODS

For the HealthStreet dataset, Health Intake data for a total of 378 respondents residing in 8 ZIP codes within Alachua County were used, while comparison data were pulled from US Census Bureau reports. Preliminary descriptive analyses were performed in order to create summary demographics and to examine ZIP code of residence frequency among HealthStreet respondents. In order to compare distributions of categorical variables between datasets, Chi-Square Goodness of Fit/Fisher's Exact tests were used, while One-Sample Student's T-Tests were used for continuous variables.

RESULTS

Several ZIP codes differed by race/ethnicity, age, level of education, employment status, family size, and marital status. In comparison to census data, individuals seen through HealthStreet tended to be Black, slightly older, not be in the labor force, have a smaller family size, and were less likely to report being currently married. HealthStreet data did not consistently differ from census data in gender, Hispanic/Latino origin, veteran status, or household size. Furthermore, over half of the respondents seen through HealthStreet (50.3%) resided in 2 ZIP codes within Alachua County. Based on these results, HealthStreet reached underrepresented populations such as minorities, individuals of lower SES and older populations; however, these results suggest HealthStreet needs to broaden its outreach radius to include more rural areas of Alachua County over the coming months.