



**DIABETES INITIATIVE**  
A National Program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



## *The Role of Community Health Workers in Diabetes Self Management*

Support for this product was provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation® in Princeton, New Jersey, 2009

# *Community Health Workers*

- Peers, from the communities they serve
- Known by many different names
- Long history of “natural helpers” in all cultures
- Not new to health care
- Resurgence in 90s in US
- Range of activities and roles as diverse as titles
- In 1998, survey documented 12,500 CHWs in the US across a number of programs
- Few studies evaluating impact/ effectiveness, particularly in chronic diseases like diabetes

# *Definition of a Community Health Worker...*

- Many and varied, but generally they
  - carry out functions related to health care delivery
  - are trained in some way in the context of the intervention
  - have no formal professional or paraprofessional certificate or degree
- In the US, the primary role of CHWs is to fill the gap in the health care system that is particularly acute among underserved communities

# *Key roles of community health workers....*

The National Community Health Advisor Study<sup>1</sup>, identified seven core roles played by CHWs:

- Bridging cultural mediation between communities and the health care system
- Providing culturally appropriate and accessible health education and information, often by using popular education methods
- Assuring that people get the services they need
- Providing informal counseling and social support
- Advocating for individuals and communities within the health and social service systems
- Providing direct services (such as basic first aid) and administering health screening tests; and
- Building individual and community capacity

<sup>1</sup><http://rho.arizona.edu/Resources/Studies/cha-study/default.aspx>

# Various Job Titles



- Community Health Worker is an umbrella term that refers to many different job titles
  - Coach
  - Lay Health Educator
  - Community Health Representative
  - Community Health Outreach Worker
  - *Promotora*

# Characteristics of Sites with CHW Interventions

Site	Audience	Area Served	Setting	CHW title
<b>Campeños Sin Fronteras Somerton AZ</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Urban/ rural</b>	<b>Community, Clinic</b>	<b>Promotora</b>
<b>Galveston County Health District, La Marque TX</b>	<b>Hispanic, African Am, White</b>	<b>Urban/ rural</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Coach</b>
<b>Gateway Community Health Center, Laredo TX</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Urban/ rural</b>	<b>Clinic</b>	<b>Promotora</b>
<b>Holyoke Health Center Holyoke MA</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Clinic/ community</b>	<b>Promotora</b>
<b>LaClinica de La Raza Oakland CA</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Clinic, community</b>	<b>Promotora</b>
<b>MaineGeneral Health Waterville ME</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Urban/Rural</b>	<b>Community Worksite</b>	<b>Lay Health Educator</b>
<b>MT-WY Tribal Leaders Council, Billings MT</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Indian Country</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Community Health Representative</b>
<b>Open Door Health Center Homestead FL</b>	<b>Hispanic, African Am</b>	<b>Urban/ rural</b>	<b>Clinic/ Community</b>	<b>Promotora</b>

# *Recruiting and Retention of CHWs*

- Methods used to recruit CHWs
  - Newspaper advertisement
  - Networking with other CHW programs
  - Referrals from providers and other professionals
  - Word of mouth
- Methods used to recognize and retain CHWs
  - Certificate from program
  - Graduation ceremony
  - Promotions
  - Wage increase\*
  - Recognition ceremonies

\* Compensation varies: CHWs may be unpaid volunteers or they may receive wages including being paid as employees with benefits)

# *Training of CHWs*

- Requires orientation plus continuing education or training by a CHW supervisor or health professional
- Examples of areas in which CHWs are trained:
  - Ability to access resources
  - Coordination of services
  - Crisis management
  - Knowledge of medical services
  - Knowledge of social services
  - Leadership
  - Organizational skills
  - Interpersonal communication skills
  - Disease prevention and management
  - Confidentiality
  - Stanford Chronic Disease Self Management Program (CDSMP)

# *Roles and Activities of CHWs*

- Bridging/cultural mediation between communities and the health and social services systems
- Providing culturally appropriate health education and information
- Assuring that people get the services they need
- Providing informal counseling and social support
- Advocating for individuals and for community needs
- Building individual and community capacity
- Leading exercise groups
- Using social marketing strategies to encourage behavior change

# *Recruitment of clients for CHWs*

- Referrals from other agencies or health care providers
- Recruitment through screening programs
- Flyers/poster/brochures
- Recruitment through outreach activities
- Churches and other nonprofit agencies
- Newspapers
- Word of mouth

# *Places for Delivery of CHW Services*

- Client's home
- Community activity or health center
- Faith-based organization
- Migrant camp
- On the street/not defined
- Public Health Clinic
- Work site

# *Key CHW Roles in Community-based Programs*

- Screen for depression at home visit using PHQ-9
- Refer as needed to health care providers
- Follow up in person and via telephone for problem solving and goal setting
- Lead support groups
- Build trust and develop a supportive relationship

# *Key CHW Roles in Clinic/Community-based Programs*

- Assess symptoms and negative emotions (trained by mental health specialists)
- Be part of the mental health team with bi-directional referral
- Participate with patient in nurse led medical management group
- Refer to health care provider for PHQ-9 screening and diagnosis
- Recruit, encourage and retain support group participants
- Conduct weekly telephone follow up for support
- Focus on group interventions
- Strengthen linkages to community resources

# *Key Roles of CHWs in Addressing Emotional Health*

- Provide education and address myths and stigmas
- Teach coping skills
- Conduct assessments/ screen
- Encourage and assist with problem solving and goal setting
- Connect clients with resources/ encourage access to care
- Provide informal counseling and support
- Support treatment plan
- Monitor and follow up
- Prepare for dealing with emergencies
- Bridge cultural beliefs and language issues

# *What makes CHWs effective?*



- CHWs have access to the population they serve
- The unique relationship they have with clients provides social support that is critical to self management
- This trusting relationship lays the foundation for good self management
- CHW's have great flexibility to meet clients needs, e.g.,
  - Amount of time spent
  - Time of day services are provided
  - Place of contact
  - Range and extent of services

# *CHWs Address Barriers*



- Bridge cultural beliefs and language issues
- Encourage access to care
- Minimize stigma of emotional problems
- Create understanding of disease
- Respect spiritual beliefs
- Break symptom cycle
- Improve relationship with providers
- Communicate emotional issues more clearly

# *Lessons Learned/Recommendations*

- CHWs serve as role models for healthy coping by taking care of themselves
- Involving health care team in developing protocols is key to program success
- It is essential to establish clear roles and procedures for emergencies
- Only clinicians can diagnose mental disorders
- Provide education materials and activities that are culturally appropriate
- Recognize the importance of your unique relationship with the client in addressing emotional health
- Assessment of risk factors for people with diabetes should include assessment of emotional health
- Healthy coping is as important as physical activity and healthy eating

# *CHW Resources*

- <http://www.famhealth.org/CHWResources/index.htm>
- <http://rho.arizona.edu/Resources/Studies/cha-study/default.aspx>
- <http://www.usm.edu/csho/>
- [http://www.usm.edu/csho/program\\_links.html](http://www.usm.edu/csho/program_links.html)
- <http://www.chwnetwork.org/page5.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/projects/comm.htm>

**For more information, see**  
<http://diabetesinitiative.org>