

“Exploring CAB Members Perceived Roles, Needs, and Skills to Promote Cancer Health Equity”

Abstract

Background: Community advisory boards (CAB) have been traditionally known to capitalize on the knowledge, and skills of community members to advance NIH-funded grants. In turn, there have been mutually beneficial results. However, very few studies have looked at the community members’ perceived role and expectations as a CAB member.

Objectives: The purpose of this explorative, qualitative study was to elicit community members’ perceived roles, motivation, and expectations while serving as a community advisory board member.

Methods: A phenomenological qualitative study design was used for interviews conducted between April 2022 and January 2023. Fifteen Community Advisory Board Members of the Meharry Medical College-Vanderbilt University Medical Center-Tennessee State University Cancer Partnership were purposefully selected for participation. Interviews were conducted by trained graduate research assistants, and they lasted approximately 30 minutes. After interviews were transcribed by Rev.com (i.e., a HIPPA-compliant platform), an inductive-deductive content analysis approach was used to analyze the interview data.

Results: Preliminary analysis suggests there are five emerging themes. 1) Community members offer unique skills as a community advisory board member; 2) There are barriers and facilitators to being a CAB member; 3) There are differences between actual versus perceived responsibilities of being a CAB member; 4) Motivations of being a CAB member vary; and 5) Training needs exist among CAB members. Community members have diverse skills including social marketing, communication, and policy which can carry out the mission of community advisory boards. CAB members perceive that their potential contributions to outreach are underutilized. Facilitators of being able to serve in the CAB include trainings offered by academic partners on research topics. While there were many perceived responsibilities, advising researchers was the most frequently cited. Personal or family experiences with cancer was cited often as a motivator for participation. Additional training needs include defining research terminology, describing clinical trials and the process, reviewing CAB objectives, and discussing the latest cancer research along with the impact of COVID-19.

Conclusions: Findings suggest community members are motivated to participate in the CAB and they offer unique skill sets that can be utilized by researchers to advance health equity. Training should be offered to ensure CAB members are competent in their positions. While community members have roles as CAB members, next steps should explore further how perceived and actual roles can merge to fit the needs of academia as well as the community.