

Capstone for Impact Submission | GY2019

Project Title: Promises and Pitfalls of MA-based Health Coaching for Underserved Populations: Lessons from Community Health Worker and Peer Coaching Studies

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Branch: Patients & Populations

Path of Excellence: Global Health and Disparities

Handover/Transition:

If this project can be continued by another UMMS student, you may contact them at the following email address/phone number (N/A if project cannot be handed over): **N/A**

Summary:

This paper explores the key opportunities and threats for programs utilizing medical assistants (MAs) as health coaches in underserved populations. Current research exploring MA health coaching is compared with models utilizing community health workers (CHWs) and peer coaches. Through this comparison, important similarities and differences between peer and CHW-led programs provide context for the successes and failures of MA led programs. The ultimate goal of this paper is to understand how to improve future implementations of MA health coaching programs in general, and in underserved populations in particular.

Methodology:

Review and comparison of health coaching studies utilizing MAs, peer coaches, and community health workers.

Results/Conclusion:

- For underserved populations, there is a need to tailor hiring practices of MAs to match the demographics of the populations that are being served to the best extent possible.

- We encourage the expansion of MAs jobs responsibilities to include explicitly leveraging their role as community members and peers, especially in underserved communities.

- A standardized competency metric needs to be created and used to evaluate the preparation of MAs in practice and research.

Reflection/Lessons Learned:

I spent my M1 summer working on a SBRP project in the Department of Family Medicine. My SBRP project focused on a low-resource pilot study that trained two medical assistants to serve as health coaches for patients of a UMHS primary care clinic. As someone with a minimal amount of research experience, SBRP challenged me, but as the summer wore on, I realized that I wasn't passionate about the work. This GHD Capstone allowed me to build on my summer research and make it relevant to my own interests - underserved primary care.