

COVID-19 research within Black communities: Utility of a **community advisory group**

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CITF 2023 – The importance of community engagement in research



Conflicts of Interest

Chantal Phillips, MD Candidate 2023

- Member of the Community Advisory Group (CAG) since August 2020.
- Participant & research assistant (compensated) in the seroMARK study.

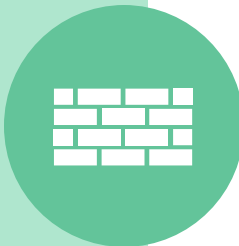
Background & Aim

- Racialized communities, including Black community members, were disproportionately affected by COVID-19.^{1,2}
- Historical and present-day systemic anti-Black racism result in under-representation of Black communities in clinical research.
- This was an anticipated barrier for our seroMARK study, focused on "understanding COVID-19 immunity among Black Canadians," which required participation from Black communities in order to be applicable and effective.
- **Implemented a Community Advisory Group (CAG) as a solution.**



Engagement

Goal: list of potential members.



Establishment



Effectiveness



Empowerment



Equity

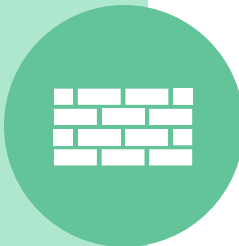


Evaluation

- Co-developed by Black academics in clinical medicine, social sciences, education, etc.
- Word of mouth through networks to connect with Black and non-Black academics focused on equity and Black leaders (e.g., community health centres, non-profits).
- Engaged un(der)represented individuals (i.e., Black youth).



Engagement



Establishment

Goal: confirmed list of diverse/intersectional members.



Effectiveness



Empowerment



Equity

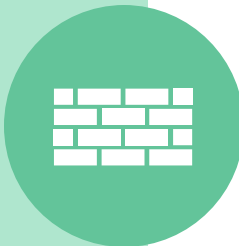


Evaluation

- Confirmed membership list.
- Reflect on CAG representation (e.g., race, age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) and gaps.
- Reinforce iterative membership model.



Engagement



Establishment



Effectiveness

Goal: regular meeting attendance & increased Black community research participation.



Empowerment



Equity

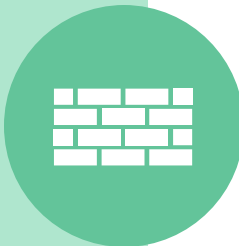


Evaluation

- Regular meetings with consistent, diverse representation.
- Monitor and report metrics (i.e., Black research project participant numbers).



Engagement



Establishment



Effectiveness



Empowerment

Goal: protocol modifications and shifts in project direction due to CAG impact.



Equity

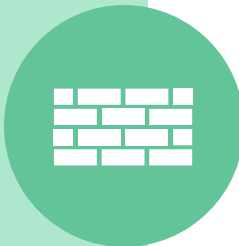


Evaluation

- Regularly update CAG on research (i.e., subject recruitment, knowledge translation, etc.).
- CAG suggestions should be incorporated where possible.
- CAG should have opportunities to learn/capacity-building.



Engagement



Establishment



Effectiveness



Empowerment



Equity



Goal: a plan to decrease barriers to participation & to directly benefit communities involved.

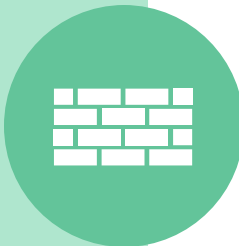


Evaluation

- Compliance with Tri-council guidelines on equity.
- Facilitate project participation.
- Leverage resources for health equity (e.g., health promotion related to chronic illness).



Engagement



Establishment



Effectiveness



Empowerment



Equity



Evaluation



Goal: awareness of strengths and weaknesses, in an iterative way that allows for revision.

- Informal evaluation (i.e., CAG discussions post-outreach events).
- Structured evaluation (on impact and process).

Impact of CAG on Research

- Enhanced engagement of Black communities.
- Increase in proportion of Black participants in the seroMARK study (i.e., two out of every three participants).
- Opportunities for co-benefits using a collaborative infrastructure to address non-COVID-19-related issues (i.e., health promotion).
- More thorough evaluation of the impact on the team is to be conducted.

Lessons Learned

Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on who is not represented in your community engagement• Community engagement = relationship building
What went well	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnerships should be mutually beneficial for research teams and engaged communities
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shifts in capacity over COVID-19 and with time

Take-aways

- Research teams need to understand **historical and present-day barriers** to recruitment and plan community engagement accordingly.
- Community engagement should not be merely extractive; it should be based on **partnerships**.
- "Community" is a **monolithic term** for communities that are very diverse and might still be un(der)represented despite efforts.

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Thank You

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