

NAPCRG Abstract: Poster on Research in Progress

Community Perceptions and Experience with Communication During COVID to Contribute to Models to Predict Future Outbreaks

Context: Predictive models of disease occurrence include multiple data sources but often exclude the community experience gathered through qualitative and quantitative methods. A multidisciplinary team, including but not limited to biochemists, geneticists, mathematicians, artificial intelligence experts, engineers, social scientists, and community collaborators, is working to create models to identify emerging infectious disease crises using multiple data sources including wastewater, COVID genomics, blowflies, and existing public datasets. Critical and novel to these models is the integration of community perceptions and experience. Objective: To gather and understand the perceptions of communication, trusted sources of communication, and impact of communication on residents throughout Western New York and to develop methods to integrate qualitative data of community experience into these models. Study Design and Analysis: Qualitative study using rapid review analysis. Setting or Dataset: Western New York. Population Studied: Purposeful sampling was conducted to ensure representation from high-risk and diverse groups. 7 focus groups and 49 interviews were conducted representing 80 individuals. 77% of respondents were female, 24% were non-White, 70% reported a disability, and 31% were essential workers. Instrument: A semi-structured interview guide was developed following the principles of community engagement. Outcome Measures: Trusted sources of communication, positive and negative reactions to public health communication, communication needs of the community. Results: The majority of participants did not perceive the threat of the pandemic until shutdown and relied on local news sources (over national sources or social media) for information. Many watched daily news briefings in the beginning but became less reliant on them the more politicized they became. Changing, inconsistent, and non-coherent messaging caused people to become skeptical of trusted sources of information. Participants want to hear from apolitical health care providers and scientists. The team is working on strategies to validate and magnify the community voice in developing predictive models and population health planning. Conclusions: Integrating the community voice into predictive models is essential for translation into real world public health monitoring systems and communication strategies and will require novel methodologic transdisciplinary approaches.