
Project management in public health research settings: The impact of innovative organizational and structural elements on management and practice

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Outline

- Background
- Research Project Managers
- Staff structure
- Case examples
- Conclusions



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Background

- Project management: the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques applied to a wide range of activities to achieve the desired goals of a project (Project Management Institute)
- Substantial research has focused on the role and contribution of project management in corporate and clinical settings (Pethybridge J., 2004, Doll BA., 2005, Konopka V., 2001)
- Information is limited regarding the role of project management in public health research settings
- MPH programs do not traditionally provide training in practice-based skills, and programs that do exist are limited

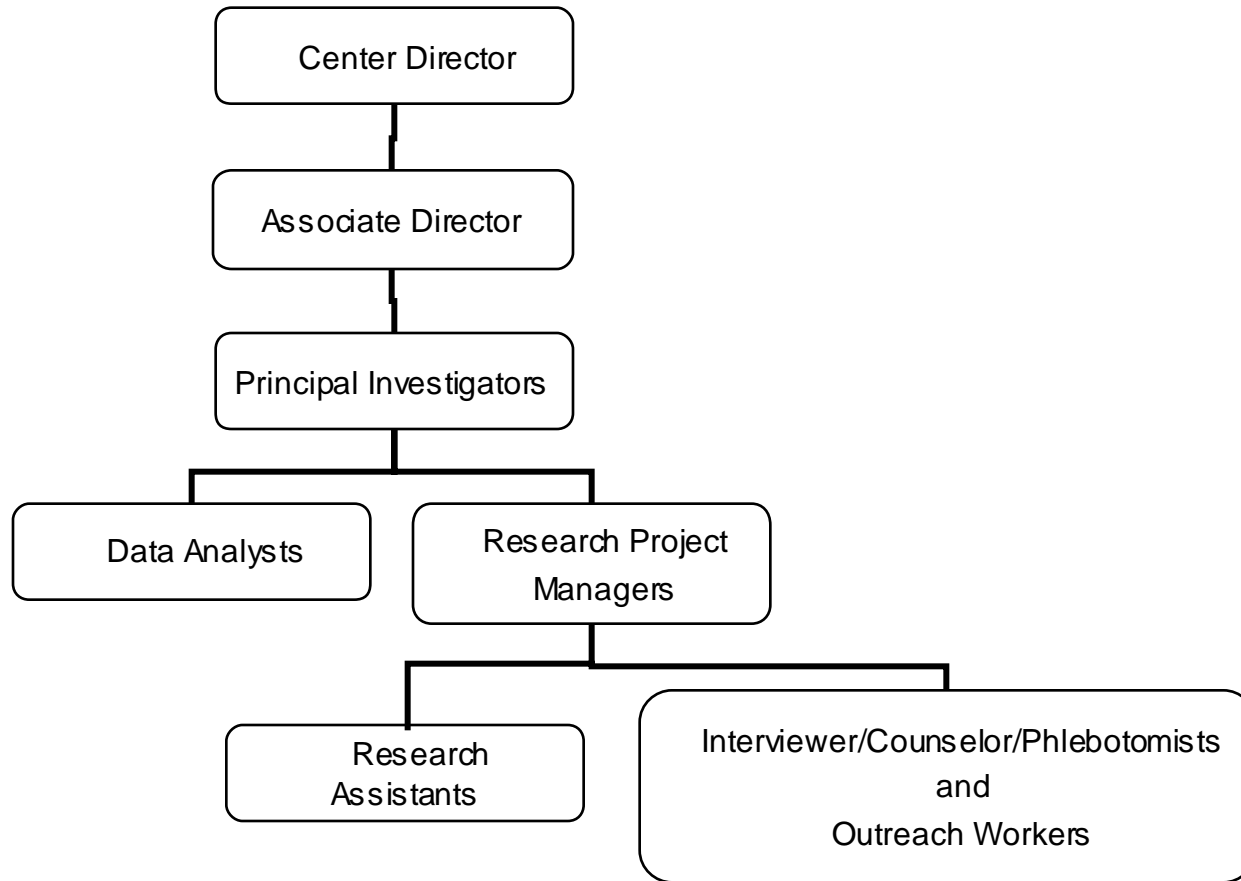


The Center for Urban Epidemiologic Studies (CUES)

- A research center of The New York Academy of Medicine, a 150-year old public health organization
- Conducts collaborative, multi-disciplinary, population-based research with a focus on low-income, disadvantaged populations in NYC
- Currently ~26 ongoing studies, ranging from group-facilitated interventions to cross-sectional and longitudinal data collection studies
- Studies address HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, substance abuse, asthma, immunization, fatal injuries, cardiovascular health and the role of social determinants of health



CUES staff structure



CUES
Staff



Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

- CBPR, a collaborative process among researchers and community members, emphasizes building trust, equitable power-sharing, capacity building, and long term commitment from all involved in the research process
- At CUES, CBPR is used to develop partnerships with community-based organizations, public health agencies, educational and other relevant institutions to study and improve community health



Harlem Community & Academic Partnership (HCAP)

- Comprised of representatives from community and academic organizations committed to identifying social determinants of health and implementing interventions to improve the health and well-being of urban residents using a CBPR approach
- Uses active community involvement in development of intervention strategies and interventions
- Three levels of function:
 - ❑ Control and maintenance of products
 - ❑ Formation of Intervention Working Groups
 - ❑ Advisory role to inform research projects



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Role of the Research Project Manager (RPM)

- Masters-level position created to assist Principal Investigators (PIs) in the management of studies
- RPM responsibilities include:
 - Project management: Data management, meeting facilitation, protocol development/implementation, IRB, outreach
 - Personnel management: Training, supervision, teambuilding, developing leadership skills
 - Academic research activities: Conferences, grant applications, data analyses, publications



Role of the RPM

- At the time of writing, CUES employed 7 RPMs from public health and social work interested in management and academic experience
- Represents a shift away from the traditional academic mentor-mentee model
 - Project Managers pursued Doctoral degrees while coordinating studies
- Professionalizes the Masters-level public health research position



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Staff structure

- Project Managers (PMs) in public health research settings traditionally operated within a vertical staff structure: PM receives direction and supervision from PI
- In large research consortia, such a structure can be limiting and can result in inefficient knowledge sharing between staff
- **CUES developed an innovative horizontally organized RPM peer group to overlay and augment the vertical structure**



RPM peer group

- Group coordinated by Senior Project Manager who oversees key elements used to increase horizontal organization:
 - ❑ Monthly meetings: A forum for RPMs to share experience, techniques and resources
 - ❑ Representation among senior staff
 - ❑ Creation of joint abstracts, manuscripts
 - ❑ Development of staff trainings



Benefits of RPM peer group

- Promotes *cross-fertilization of information and ideas* among managers of multiple large-scale projects
- Provides *training mechanism* for public health practice skills
- Preserves *institutional knowledge* during periods of staff transition



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Case examples: benefits and limitations of RPM structure

- Harlem Community & Academic Partnership
 - Partnership committed to identifying social determinants of health and implementing interventions using CBPR approach
- Multilevel Intervention: Project VIVA
 - CBPR intervention designed to rapidly vaccinate hard-to-reach populations in non-traditional settings



Harlem Community & Academic Partnership



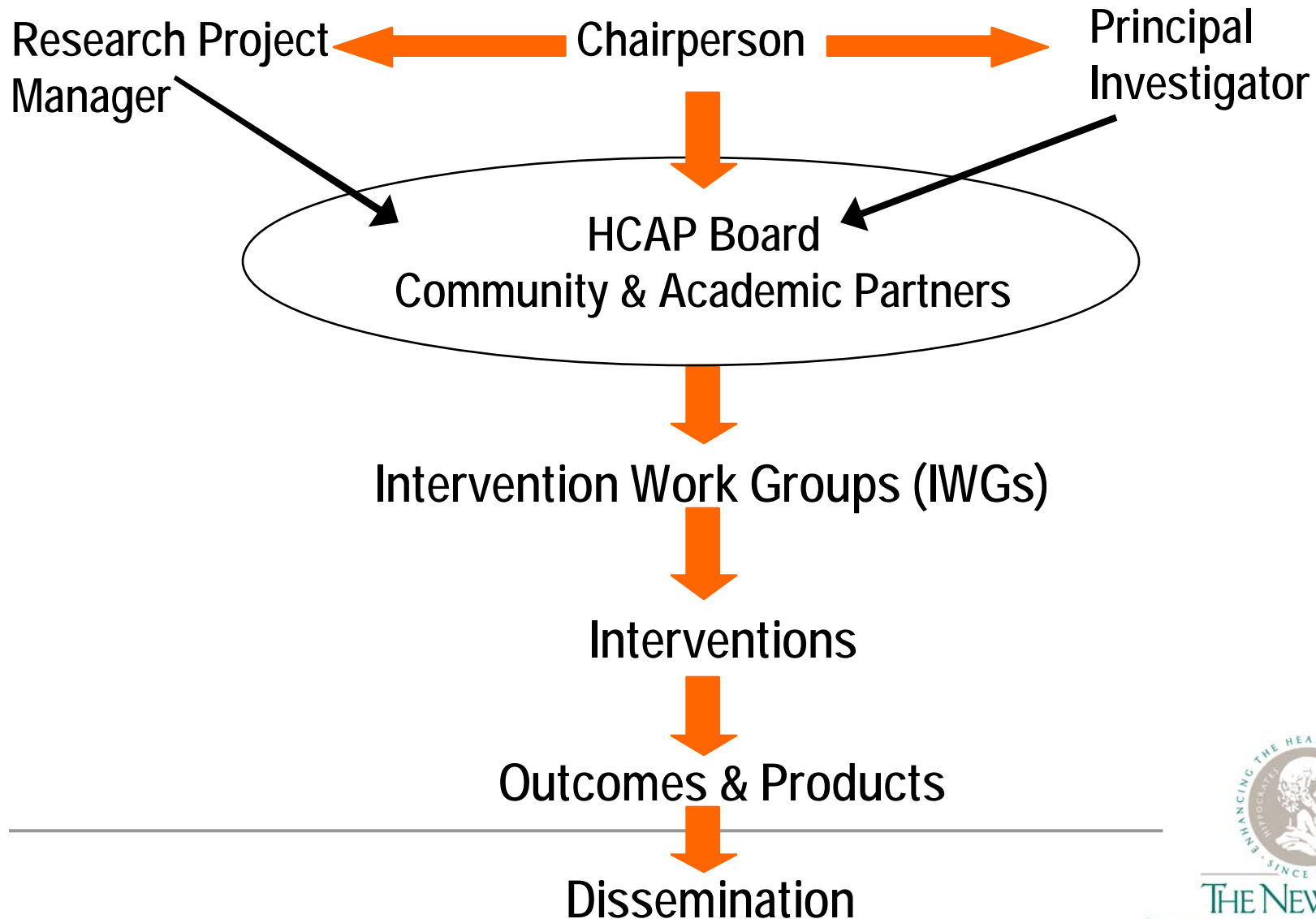
- RPM responsibilities
 - Promote effective communication/connections between members; ensure cultural awareness & community's needs at core of research; coordinate writing & submission of grants
- Lessons learned
 - Achieving balance between research & practice is ongoing process; using CBPR approach can be effective process for study design, implementation and results dissemination
- Impact of organizational structures
 - RPMs collaborated on development of community & academic relations, grants and project materials





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Harlem Community & Academic Partnership (HCAP)



HARLEM RESOURCE GUIDE

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Welcome

The Harlem Resource Guide is a searchable database intended for service providers to search and locate local services for their clients.

The web-based Guide was developed by the Harlem Community & Academic Partnership (HCAP) at the Center for Urban Epidemiologic Studies of The New York Academy of Medicine in 2002. The Guide was developed through a community-based process with the goal of improving the health and well-being of Harlem residents by making it possible to access up-to-date referral information. As a searchable database of health, human, and social services, the Guide allows providers to easily search for services and referrals for their clients.

The Guide will begin expanding the listing of agencies to include other neighborhoods in Manhattan, Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn.

Please Login to enter or update your organization and program information

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Multilevel Intervention: Project VIVA

- RPM responsibilities
 - Development of educational and other project materials; supervision of outreach team; promoting and fostering teamwork & teambuilding
- Lessons learned
 - Studies often faced with unforeseen changes—being flexible is critical; successful strategies to deal with shortage included involving community members in decision-making & effective re-training of staff
- Impact of organizational structures
 - Collaborated on staff training & development/implementation of new survey instrument

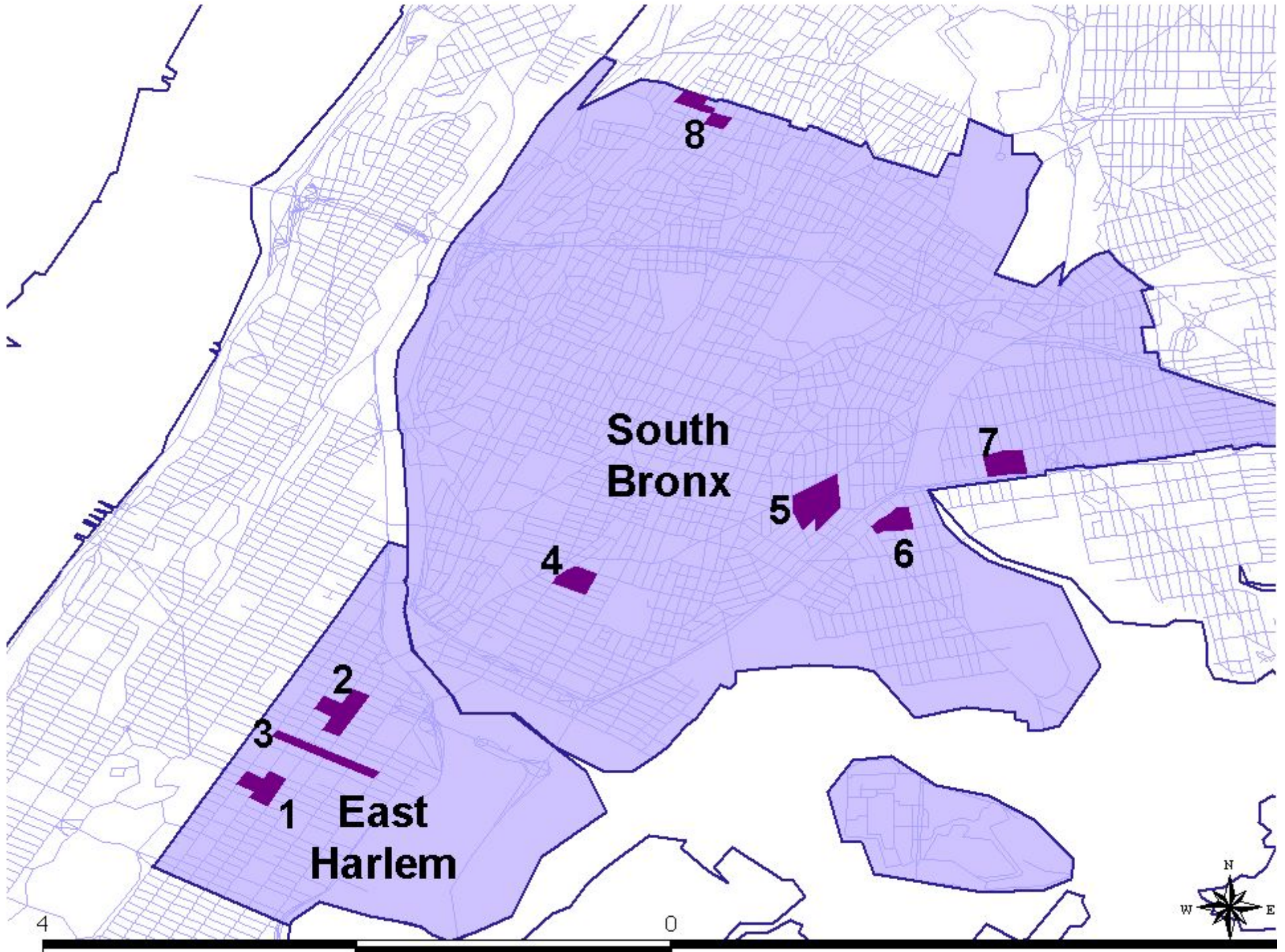


Our VIVA Team!

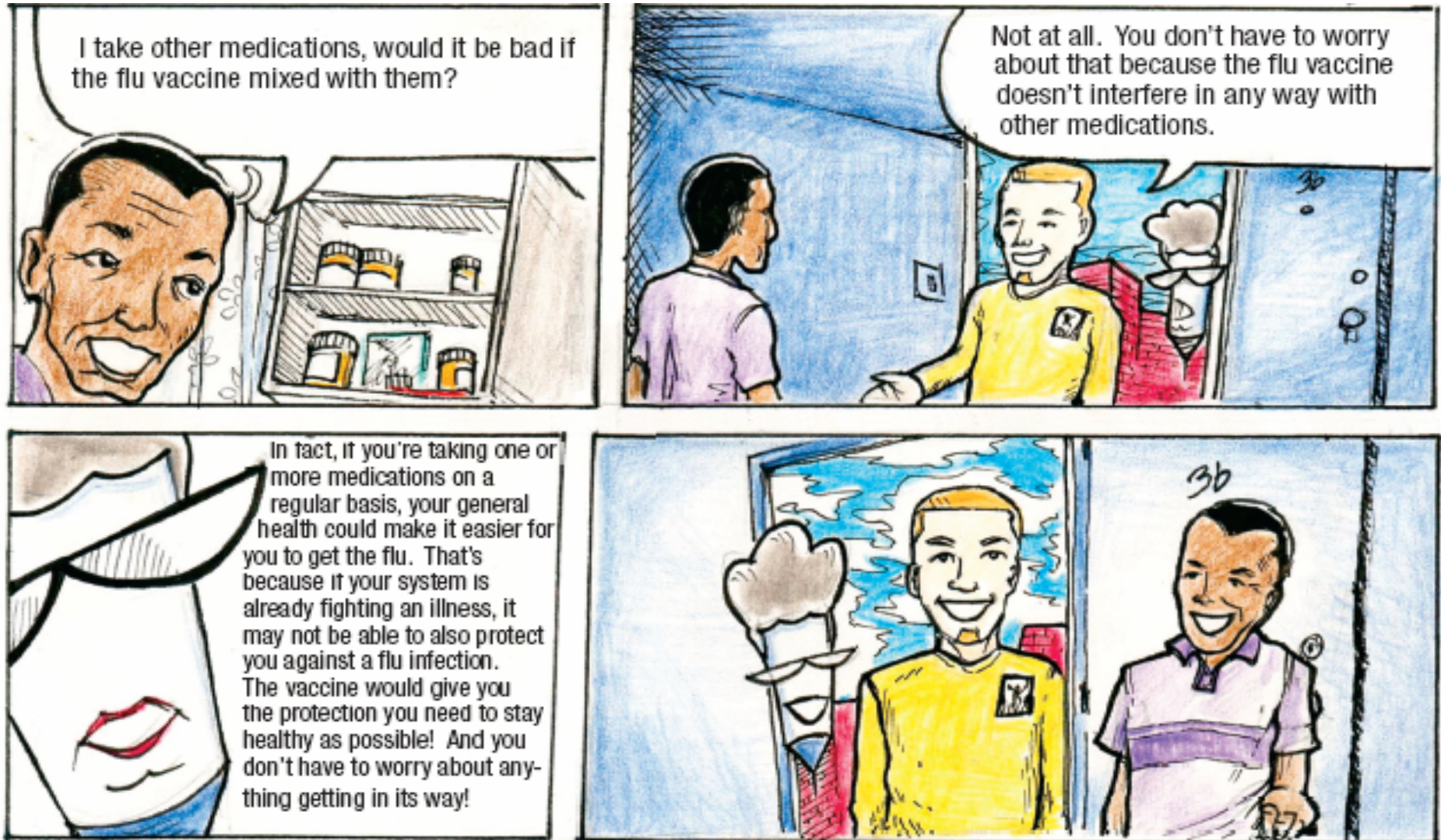




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The flu vaccine won't interfere with meds you are already taking





What ELSE can you do...

Stay home when you are sick. If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

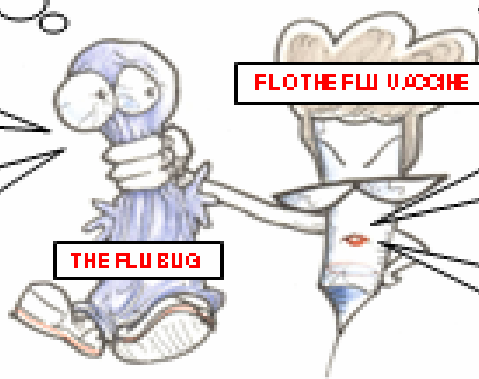
Avoid close contact. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Also, when you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

Wash your hands.

Cleaning your hands often will help protect you from germs! Using soap and hot water, rubbing vigorously for about half a minute, works well. Some people use the "Happy Birthday" rule—if you sing the song to yourself twice, that's how long a good hand-washing should take!

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

Eat healthy foods! Eat foods rich in vitamins A, C, and E, such as milk, eggs, fish oil, melons, red peppers, citrus fruits, peanut butter, corn oil, spinach and nuts!



Cover your mouth! Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may help prevent those around you from getting sick.

Get a new water bottle! Refilling old water bottles trap a lot of germs and bacteria!

...to fight off the FLU?



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Conclusions

- Organizational structures can be used to develop, implement and maintain population-based health research studies in urban environments
- RPMs have a unique identify and representation among staff
- Mechanisms developed for joint training, resource-sharing and problem solving have resulted in improved skill-sets, work performance and more successful and efficient project management
- MPH programs may want to consider training components and curriculum to develop RPM-related skills
- Challenges remain, including forming and sustaining a cohesive RPM core

