

Using Photovoice to Capture the Understanding of Heart Health in the Chinese American Community

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Background

According to the American Heart Association, CVD, particularly coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke, remains the leading causes of death of women in America, with nearly 39 percent of all female deaths in the U.S. occurring from CVD. It is the number one cause of death in women in the Chinese community. However, only 8% of American women understand that CVD in their greatest health threat. The Chinese American Healthy Heart Coalition in partnership with NYU developed a community-based intervention to address this unmet health concern.

Objectives

1. Demonstrate photovoice as an innovative and community-based method to raise awareness, assess community needs and enhance health promotion efforts.
2. Identify and gain perspective on the health needs of Asian American women and girls in an urban setting.
3. Develop a health education plan to promote heart disease for the Chinese American community

Partners

This project was a collaboration between NYU's CSAAH and the Chinese American Healthy Heart Coalition.

Funding

This project was funded by the Asian Women Giving Circle (2008-2009).

Methods

To capture the breadth and depth of the Chinese community's perspectives on heart health, photovoice was used as an innovative method to enhance understanding of the health needs and the available resources on cardiovascular disease and related conditions among Chinese American women in NYC. Photovoice enables participants to identify, record, and represent their knowledge of personal and community issues. Through photos, participants conceptualize and reflect on the issues, promote critical dialogue, and document lived experiences. The project engaged senior women and high school students, divided into two cohorts by age group. A series of orientation and discussion-based workshops were facilitated with each group. Once all phases of the photovoice and analyses are completed, the photographs, for public presentation, identified themes, and accompanying notes or captions will be included

Findings and Evaluation



The two sets of photographs and their captions were sent to a registered nurse and community health educator, Waiwah Chung, RN, MS and a nutritionalist, Sally Wong, PhD. The two consultants were invited to be guest speakers/ evaluators, at the final meeting where the two groups would meet and discuss their photos with each other- part of the goal was to see the differences and similarities between the meaning of heart health from a senior viewpoint and youth viewpoint. In preparation for the meeting, Waiwah and Sally went over the photos independently and wrote a preliminary report on their initial findings of the results.

The initial report stated that the seniors were generally correct, but some of the youth's captions were not substantiated by actual facts. It was also found that that the youth had valid pictures, but their reasoning for their pertinence to cardiovascular health was not always valid. The practicality of the facts were also questioned: could they be applied on a daily basis, like cooking with fresh herbs instead of seasoning?

At the final meeting, the importance of the inaccuracy of facts presented was still emphasized. It was also noted that all the participants were immigrants, and none of the youth members had lived in America for more than three years; this fact might be an indicator on where the immigrant population stands on their comprehension of heart health in the United States.



Results

Both groups shared parallel ideas like the importance of eating healthily and exercising to promote good heart health and the adverse effects of unhealthy foods on heart health



Both groups had a good general knowledge of cardiovascular health in the subject of food; however, the knowledge was very broad, and details that would specifically identify something as being good or bad for heart health were not covered

Both groups included some facts that they found online or in a magazine that were not substantially supported, showing that it is important to filter the information that is available to make sure they are correct and work constructively towards a healthy heart



Both groups stressed also stressed mental health as a factor for being healthy

Now what? We must question the practicality of this knowledge. Even though people know these facts, will they actually apply it to their daily lives?

Quotes

"I was happy to participate in this project. Besides doing education exchange with friends, I also worked on my photography skills."

"I learned a lot of things that I never thought about before... I can use this information and teach my family how to maintain a healthy body"

"I have some heart problems, I learned a lot of information that I can use to control my daily life."

"I learned that not all the information from the internet is reliable."