A train-the-trainer project: Equipping *promotoras* to empower Hispanic families in South Texas to recognize developmental milestones and warning signs of autism

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Goals & Objectives

Goals
• Provide *promotoras* with *culturally sensitive* educational tools for their community outreach
• *Increase knowledge* about childhood developmental milestones
• *Decrease barriers* to autism diagnosis among Hispanic families

Objectives
• Describe the disparity in autism diagnoses among Hispanic children
• Identify the strengths of using community health workers to raise awareness about specific health issues in target populations
Numbers

• In 2010 1 in 68 children were diagnosed with autism\(^3\)
• Between 2000 to 2006 there was a 3-fold increase in diagnoses among Hispanic children\(^6\)
• Hispanic children are diagnosed with autism 2.5 years later than non-Hispanic white children\(^4\)
• There are fewer autism diagnoses in Hispanic children versus non-Hispanic white children in South Texas schools\(^5\)
Community Health Workers

- There are approximately 3000 certified *promotoras* (community health workers) in Texas and over 500 certified *promotoras* in Region 11 (Rio Grande Valley)\(^7\)
- The *promotora* model has proven to be effective in public health interventions resulting in better health outcomes among ethnic minorities\(^1,2\)
Intervention

Materials

- Bilingual *promotora*-training curriculum developed by Organization of Autism Research (OAR)
- Educational materials from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) “Learn the signs. Act early.” campaign

Methods

- Phase I: Training
  - 58 *promotoras* from Cameron and Hidalgo Counties trained with OAR curriculum
- Phase II: Intervention
  - 10 trained *promotoras* did home visits; distributed OAR and CDC materials
  - Follow up visits with families 2-3 months later
- Phase III: Focus Groups
  - 8 promotoras participated who did intervention
  - 19 promotoras participated who attended workshop only
Focus Group Results

Figure 1. *Promotoras* response to training with OAR curriculum (n=27)

- Workshop was interactive: 14
- Limited knowledge of developmental milestones and autism before training: 12
- Increased knowledge after workshop: 11
- Some knowledge before workshop: 10
- Well prepared to teach curriculum: 5
- Interest in further training about autism: 3

Number of times theme arose
Focus Group Results

Figure 2. Target community characteristics (n=27)

- Want more information
- Stigma and emotional impact of autism
- Little known about developmental milestones
- Low level of education
- Need for more specialists
- Limited resources and lack of information

Number of times themes arose

![Bar chart showing the number of times themes arose for different characteristics. The chart indicates the following:

- Want more information: 16 times
- Stigma and emotional impact of autism: 13 times
- Little known about developmental milestones: 10 times
- Low level of education: 6 times
- Need for more specialists: 5 times
- Limited resources and lack of information: 4 times]
Focus Group Results

Figure 3. *Promotores* self-perceived role in the community (n=27)

- Effective teachers
- Create awareness of autism
- Have more time to teach
- Trusted in community
- Culturally sensitive

Number of times theme arose
Focus Group Results

Figure 4. Effectiveness of curriculum for community outreach (n=27)

- Simple and understandable: 12
- Adaptable to different cultures: 3
- Families consulted physician: 3
- Good reference or guide for parents: 3
- No significant barriers to teaching: 3
- Families shared with others: 2

Number of times themes arose
Focus Group Results

• Limitations of curriculum
  – Not enough time to master the material
  – Difficult to distinguish between similar developmental milestones

• Recommendations for curriculum modification
  – Health fair intervention
    • Cultural sensitivity – asking age of child is inappropriate
    • Adaptability – need flexibility for each individual encounter, following guidelines may not be applicable
Discussion Questions

• How can other community partnerships meet the needs of parents with children with developmental delays?

• What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a promotora model to educate families about this topic?

• What methods can be used to decrease stigmatization of an autism diagnosis among Hispanics?
References


