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**
- Between 2000 to 2006 there was a **3-fold increase** in diagnoses among Hispanic children
- Hispanic children are diagnosed with autism **2.5 years** later than non-Hispanic white children
- There are **fewer** autism diagnoses in Hispanic children versus non-Hispanic white children in South Texas schools

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)
- The promotora model has proven to be effective in public health interventions resulting in better health outcomes among ethnic minorities

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
- Limited knowledge of developmental milestones and autism before training
- Increased knowledge after workshop
- Some knowledge before workshop
- Well prepared to teach curriculum
- Interest in further training about autism

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**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

**Focus Group Results**

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

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

**Focus Group Results**

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

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

**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**