

Tools for Community-Based Research Summary Report

In spring 2016, Universities Without Walls, the distance education and training arm of the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN), partnered with the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) to pilot a certificate course in community-based research (CBR) methods.¹ This report, based on a pre & post evaluations from the course, analytics from the Learning Management System (LMS) and students' testimonials shows that the course continues to be an overwhelming educational success.

Tools for Community-Based Research was an intensive, 5 week “blended learning”² course that ran from January 11th, 2016 to February 14th, 2016. A diverse group of 27 students enrolled in the course, including graduate students, physicians, and a variety of community leaders from the HIV/AIDS and other health sectors. We're delighted to report that 26 students successfully completed the mandatory assignments and received their certificates.

The curriculum was broken into 6 self-directed learning sessions, 2 synchronous online sessions and 2 in-person seminars. The curriculum included how to foster and sustain research partnerships, ethics, frequently used data collection methods and how to turn knowledge to action. The examples used were from health related CBR with an emphasis on HIV related research. During the self-directed sessions, students were asked to complete 10 different learning modules.³ Based on the analytics from our LMS, we know that, on average, each module was viewed 1.8 times per student. The 27 students completed all assigned self-directed learning modules during the course. 70% of the students reported this was their first time taking a post-secondary course online.

Measuring Learning

The learning objectives for this course were to help students (1) become aware of basic terms used in community-based research (CBR); (2) begin to apply CBR concepts to research contexts familiar to the learner; (3) increase the learner's readiness level to participate in a community based research (CBR) study; (4) Apply new knowledge and concepts by sketching a CBR research proposal.

To measure student learning, learners were asked to rate their levels of knowledge, skills, and experience pre and post training using a modified Kolb learning scale (ranging from “novice/advanced beginner” to “proficient/expert”).⁴

¹ Additional information about the course's learning objectives and instructor bio can be found online at <http://edu.yorku.ca/prof/dev/professional-programs/tools-for-community-based-research/>

² “Blended learning” integrates face-to-face and online learning. Online and classroom activities and course materials are selected to complement each other, to engage students and to achieve specified learning outcomes. <https://uw.aterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/resources/blended-learning>

³ The self-directed learning modules used in this course can be accessed at www.universitieswithoutwalls.ca/?page_id=996

⁴ Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning as the Science of Learning and Development*. NJ: Prentice Hall.

As a result of their participation in Tools for Community-Based Research, students experienced the greatest change in knowledge in the following areas:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basic terms and concepts in CBR and HIV research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pre= 63% novice/advanced beginner → Post= 0% novice/advanced beginner ○ Pre= 6% proficient/expert → Post = 69% proficient/expert
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to develop a research proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pre= 88% novice/advanced beginner → Post= 25% novice/advanced beginner ○ Pre= 6% proficient/expert → Post = 44% proficient/expert
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools and approaches to support research knowledge translation and dissemination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pre= 81% novice/advanced beginner → Post= 19% novice/advanced beginner ○ Pre= 0% proficient/expert → Post = 44% proficient/expert

In addition, here's how some of the students anonymously described their learning experience in our post-evaluation:

“I now know the process, the steps, and which agency that needs to be approached and the different approaches that can be used to collect Data.”

“Comparing indigenous storytelling and general focus groups was an interesting contrast of cultures and methods. This provided the platform for being more thoughtful about any data collection method and strategy. Understanding the group's context and matching it with your resources and strengths was a valuable experience.”

“This course helped me realize how meaningful community partnerships can strengthen a research project and lead to long term positive change.”

“I am now familiar with key steps in planning a reach proposal and the understand the jargon used in CBR -specifically qualitative research methods.”

Acknowledgements

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