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Community and civic engagement techniques in health sciences education

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Community health, its sustenance, development, and maintenance require continual learning across health systems and their users. The efficacy of coordinated or interlinked health care systems as part of comprehensive community health provisioning is widely endorsed. The strategies for the education and training of community-oriented health workforce professionals, however, are in need of wider dissemination and adoption. Health sciences education with community and civic engagement presents an unparalleled opportunity for health care professionals to acquire life-long education in community health promotion. This presentation considers current and prospective strategies for the post-secondary education and training of health sciences professionals in community and civic engagement for health. First is the recognition that community health must be framed from a community action theory perspective; and specifically the mutual learning of health care providers and their community partners on best strategies for health promotion in the context of existing and prospective needs and resources. Second, is the emerging evidence to suggest that community-oriented health systems have the mutual benefits of service responsiveness; hence efficiency and economy from the transfer of learning and shared knowledge by service providers and consumers. Professionals in the health sciences are skilled in various disciplines (e.g. behaviour and community health, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, rehabilitation and health psychology, community medicine, speech pathology) and in their service provisioning, and increasingly seek to re-tool in their community engagement for health skills. Community and civic engagement for health experiences are a way by which pre-service health sciences professionals learn from, and with, their communities about lived health and wellbeing, and partnership qualities essential to sustained community health. This presentation highlights exemplars in infusing community and civic engagement experiences in the pre-service preparation of health professionals from a variety of health sciences disciplines.

Keywords: health services; civic engagement; knowledge transfer