

November 2022

An Interprofessional Public Library-Academic Partnership for Community Outreach on Women's Health

Lyndonna Marrast
Northwell Health

Eun Ji Kim

Danielle Ezzo

Joseph Conigliaro

Follow this and additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ulj>



Part of the [Community Health and Preventive Medicine Commons](#), [Interprofessional Education Commons](#), [Library and Information Science Commons](#), and the [Women's Health Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Marrast, L., Kim, E., Ezzo, D., & Conigliaro, J. (2022). An Interprofessional Public Library-Academic Partnership for Community Outreach on Women's Health. *Urban Library Journal*, 28 (1). Retrieved from <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ulj/vol28/iss1/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Urban Library Journal* by an authorized editor of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact AcademicWorks@cuny.edu.

An Interprofessional Public Library-Academic Partnership for Community Outreach on Women's Health

Cover Page Footnote

We wish to thank Tamara Michel, Community Health Coordinator, from Queens Public Library and Annette Roth, Director, Community Outreach at Northwell Health for assistance with putting our program together. The authors wish to thank Jack Tocco, PhD for feedback on prior drafts of this manuscript. This pilot program was conducted with funding from the Katz Institute for Women's Health (KIWH)-Innovations Grant Program – Community Category at Northwell Health.

An Interprofessional Public Library-Academic Medical Center Partnership for Community Outreach on Women's Health

by Lyndonna Marrast, Eun Ji Kim, Danielle Ezzo, & Joseph Conigliaro

Abstract

This article describes a collaboration between a branch of the Queens Public Library in New York and an academic medical center that delivered a women's health educational program with an interprofessional team of faculty, trainees, and students. The team delivered interactive one-hour-long monthly sessions in a Question-and-Answer format, guided by a Powerpoint presentation to community members. The overall goal was to deliver health education workshops on common medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart disease) and concerns of interest to women across the lifespan (e.g., infertility, dementia) to improve the health literacy of local community members. We outline the steps in establishing this collaboration and the process of selecting topics and describe lessons learned from the endeavor as well as future directions. As we move toward population health management, innovative means such as partnerships with local libraries represent one way to reach the public. This type of programming has potential to improve health literacy and address social determinants of health by providing the community members with timely, trusted health-related information.

Keywords

Public library-academic medical center partnership, interprofessional team, women's health, community outreach

Author Biographies

Lyndonna Marrast, MD, MPH, is an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell, in Hempstead, NY. As a physician-scholar, she teaches health equity topics to interprofessional trainees and forms community-academy partnerships that seek to increase the health literacy of the public. Her additional roles include researcher, mentor, and career coach.

Eun Ji Kim, MD, MS, MS, is an Associate Professor of Medicine at the Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell. As a clinician-researcher, she is interested in improving health disparities, particularly the social determinants of health, and identifying community level social needs and their impact on healthcare utilization.

Danielle Ezzo, PharmD, is an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Clinical Health Professions at the St. John's University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Queens, NY. Dr. Ezzo has spent much of her career working with seniors, providing medication management sessions throughout Nassau, Suffolk, and Queens counties. Dr. Ezzo's current practice site is within the Division of General Internal Medicine at Northwell Health, where she provides clinical pharmacy services to indigent populations within Queens. Dr. Ezzo also serves the College of Pharmacy and Health Professions as the Director of Interprofessional Education.

Dr. Joseph Conigliaro, Professor of Medicine, is Division Chief of General Internal Medicine in the Department of Medicine and Vice Chair of Academic Affairs at Northwell Health. He has expertise in the evaluation of brief interventions to reduce hazardous drinking, health care disparities, and implementation of best practices in clinical care.

Introduction

Totaling over 9000 branches (American Library Association), public libraries in the United States are resources that provide information to any seeker free of charge, and are thus key institutions in democratizing knowledge for the public. Within the last half-century, public libraries have evolved into community centers by: (1) creating a bridge to resources and community involvement, (2) encouraging social inclusion and equity, and (3) serving as a conduit to access information and to learn (Morgan et al., 2016; Podair & Simon, 1957; Scott, 2011). The public library has been utilized limitedly for community outreach, although it can potentially reach wide segments of the population. New York City is served by three public library systems; Queens Borough Public Library is one of them, serving over 2 million people in one of the most diverse counties in the United States (Narula, 2014; "Queens Public Library," 2021).

Prior studies in libraries sought to engage librarians or library staff members (Cobus, 2008; Morgan et al., 2018). They followed a train-the-trainer model to increase the librarians' ability to find health-related information. Other studies using libraries for health education tailor their curriculum to specific diseases, such as HIV, which may be of high prevalence in the surrounding community (Broering et al., 2012). Other locales have used the library for healthcare delivery and not just education (e.g., Department of Health nurses to deliver vaccines; Malkin & Feingold, 2014). Many authors note the changing roles of libraries as a social system of healthcare delivery and the relationship of these changed roles to public health and health policy (Cooper & Crum, 2013).

The healthcare system in the United States is complex, a challenge to navigate, and exhibits wide-spread inequity. The public has a consistent need for reliable and comprehensive health information; the public library represents a trusted place to

obtain it (Horrigan, 2016; Whitney et al., 2017). However, Library staff may be seen as less on an “intermediary for information-seeking activities” with greater access to technology (Cooper & Crum, 2013). In light of the growing level of health-related misinformation available, more sources (online and in our built environments) are needed that can counter numerous false narratives to which members of the public can be exposed (Geiger, 2017). Specifically, academic medical centers can play a role by collaborating with libraries in the provision of health education and play a complementary role alongside the library staff.

In the fall of 2018, the Division of General Internal Medicine at Northwell Health (the Division) received a Community Innovations grant from the Katz Institute for Women’s Health, both in Queens, N.Y., entitled “Women’s Health across the Lifespan.” The grant made possible the creation of a program called Health Education at Libraries (HEAL). We comprised an interprofessional team of healthcare providers from the Division and from the St. John’s University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, located in Queens, NY. The team delivered a series of ten workshops to community members in 2019 addressing health issues salient in the lives of women. The team consisted of doctors trained in internal medicine and in pediatrics, a psychologist, social workers, nutritionists, and clinical pharmacists. Topics spanned the life course of women’s health issues including preconception counseling, infertility, heart disease, diabetes, health screenings, and dementia (see Table 1 below).

This article describes a partnership between (a branch of) the Queens Public Library and an academic medical center to conduct a health education program with the main objective of developing curriculum that is engaging, interactive, and applicable to the lives of women in New York City. We sought to create a safe space to discuss topics that promote healthy living and preventative self-care but also to address common medical problems that afflict local communities. The long-term goal was to form, build, and support a collaboration with the local public library. We provide lessons learned from our experience in establishing stakeholders, identifying topics, and planning educational sessions. This community outreach program provided an opportunity for the healthcare professionals, along with their respective students and trainees, to collaborate and provide discipline-specific content outside of the clinical space. This type of collaborative model serves as a platform for interprofessional education and practice through community outreach. We outline the structure of this pilot project below.

Materials and Methods

Stakeholders, Topic Selection, & Session Planning: The three components key to launching our program included establishing stakeholders, identifying topics, and planning educational sessions. First, we identified the individuals with a role in health education programming within the academic healthcare and public library systems. They were the interdisciplinary healthcare providers from the Division,

the health system's community outreach administrator, and the community liaison for the library. The healthcare providers and trainees met separately to plan content and also held conference calls to communicate with the community outreach stakeholders.

Second, the group had to decide on the best topics for the program to avoid duplication with current library programming. The needs of community members were also considered by identifying diseases of high prevalence in the target population. We evaluated disease prevalence data from the local Department of Health and community needs assessment documents from the health system which showed that chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes were highly prevalent. In addition, we learned that programming that targeted the elderly population was already in existence. Our grant was primarily to focus on women's health topics across the lifespan. Still, we gave priority to conditions that would be of interest to general audiences but without overlapping current library programming.

Third, participants launched the actual HEAL program. The team decided to deliver monthly one-hour workshops with specific speakers for each workshop, and reviewed articles that could be used to develop content. On a rare occasion, health professionals would present solo on a topic. However, the more senior team members encouraged their students and residents to present portions of the workshops. These events would enhance their public speaking skills, provide community outreach experience, and offer an opportunity to interact with health-seeking audiences outside the clinical practice. An optional assessment form was distributed at the end of each session. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research determined this project was exempt from a full review as it did not meet criteria for human subjects research. As standard practice, investigators seek approval from an IRB to ensure that the ethics of a research project are sound, but some studies, such as an assessment of a service or educational program like this one, are considered exempt.

The sessions were delivered in the form of lectures in a community room in the library. A PowerPoint presentation was used to guide the sessions with attendees able to ask questions throughout. The majority of the sessions had a medical and pharmacy representative. Each session featured handouts that provided summary points from or additional information on the topics of the session. At the end, an optional assessment sheet was distributed to get feedback and ask about further topics of interest. Outreach to recruit attendees was done via the marketing arm of the library via postings of printed fliers and listed on the libraries events calendar.

Results

Over the course of ten months, we reached approximately 74 participants and received assessment forms from 28 participants. We collected data that included level of education, gender, and health status as well as a rating of knowledge before

and after the session. Attendees were predominantly middle-aged females with some level of college education or above. They generally reported themselves to be in “good” to “very good” health, reported having a primary care doctor, and reported that they had seen their primary care doctor in the past 12 months. To determine the degree to which participants were able to learn from the program and potentially increase their health knowledge, we asked them to rate their knowledge of the topic on a Likert Scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least knowledgeable and 5 the most knowledgeable. Although statistical testing was not conducted, participants rated their knowledge at an average of 3.4 out of 5 before the workshop, and 4 following the workshop (data not shown).

Discussion

In this collaboration of professionals in medicine and pharmacy delivering health education at a local library, we found that the program had the potential to increase participants’ knowledge of common topics in healthcare and general internal medicine.

One strength of our programming was the interprofessional collaboration, which allowed us to incorporate a clinical pharmacy, nutritionist, and psychology perspective in the educational sessions. The sessions reflected topics of salience to women and their families. Still, we had several limitations: We experienced wide variability in attendance. We had incomplete evaluation data. The topics were selected largely by the team as opposed to the community members. Lastly, we catered only to an English-speaking audience.

As this program represented a pilot project, future directions would seek to create a more comprehensive experience, for example, catering to bilingual citizens, delivering culturally targeted messages, and considering virtual versus in-person modes of delivery. Future iterations would also include librarian ratings of the project as these were not evaluated in the pilot. The connections across sectors like social work and law can help address social determinants of health, which are increasingly recognized as contributors to poor health in vulnerable communities. There is a need to democratize information related to nutrition, chronic disease management, and stress management. Making this type of information available to the public without regard to insurance status or ability to pay would have a very beneficial impact on community members. Last, having public health departments and academic health centers view the local library system as part of the healthcare education and delivery system will increase access to information and healthcare (Nutbeam et al, 2018; Philbin et al., 2019).

Librarians may approach local teaching hospitals to replicate similar collaborations by identifying the persons responsible for community engagement, outreach, or partnerships with local organizations, if and when they exist. As this project represents just one health system, replicating this model will need multiple

stakeholders across varying disciplines in a different health system. Though a repeat may not mirror our efforts exactly, future collaborations can be tailored to meet the educational needs of the surrounding community based on needs assessments conducted by the health system or anecdotal feedback from the library staff. Additionally, partnering with local colleges for health-related programming is another strategy for public library-academic partnerships (Lenstra, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought greater awareness of inequities in health care, and led us to reimagine what future collaborations would look like as gatherings move from in-person to virtual spaces (Khalili, 2020). There was an increased need for the transfer of timely and relevant health information to members of the public. Considering regional differences in the pandemic, health systems can work with local libraries to disseminate appropriate messaging. In the future, connections between marketing departments and departments of information technology can relay information about planned sessions. Moving forward, as telemedicine capabilities increase, many questions arise: Can local libraries play a role in helping the public connect to providers via Smartphones? What happens when individuals who lack an internet connection at home try to connect in public spaces? How else can large health organizations leverage their resources to collaborate with local libraries? How can we further transform these spaces to meet the health needs of the public as healthcare and health education at libraries experience technological advances?

Though larger societal changes are needed to increase access to healthcare for all members of society and to improve K-12 education to improve health literacy for future generations, this type of community-academic partnership between a library and an academic center helps bridge the gap between patients looking for health information from trusted sources and providers who can provide that expert information. It allows academic centers to have a presence in the community—not just for the sake of promoting good will, but also to improve the health literacy and the health of the surrounding communities. Finally, we did not study the impact of this program on the presenters. Yet, when disciplines work collaboratively, the benefits are twofold: the collaboration enriches the content of the information disseminated and strengthens the bond among the professionals.

Conclusion

Given the long-standing history of libraries in supporting local community members, public library-academic partnerships can become vital to improving population health through increasing health literacy, addressing social determinants of health, and providing trusted health information to community members, thus becoming a transformative way to democratize health information and improve community health.

References

- American Library Association. (2022, June 29). Library statistics and figures: Number of public libraries in the United States over time. <https://libguides.ala.org/librariystatistics/numberoflibrariesvertime>. Retrieved August 18, 2022.
- Broering, N. C., Chauncey, G. A., & Miller, J. (2012). HIV/AIDS health information outreach service in San Diego. *Journal of Consumer Health on the Internet* 16(1): 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15398285.2012.646227>
- Cobus L. (2008). Integrating information literacy into the education of public health professionals: Roles for librarians and the library. *Journal of the Medical Library Association: JMLA* 96(1): 28-33. <https://doi.org/10.3163/1536-5050.96.1.28>
- Cooper I. D., & Crum, J. A. (2013). New activities and changing roles of health sciences librarians: A systematic review, 1990-2012. *Journal of the Medical Library Association: JMLA* 101(4): 268-277. <https://doi.org/10.3163/1536-5050.101.4.008>
- Geiger, A. W. (2017). Most Americans – especially Millennials – say libraries can help them find reliable, trustworthy information. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/30/most-americans-especially-millennials-say-libraries-can-help-them-find-reliable-trustworthy-information/>
- Horrigan, J. B. (2016). Libraries 2016: 2. Library usage and engagement. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2016/09/09/library-usage-and-engagement/>
- Khalili, H. (2020). Online interprofessional education during and post the COVID-19 pandemic: A commentary. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 34(5), 687-690. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13561820.2020.1792424>
- Lenstra, Noah. (2019, May 1). Exercise your resources: Public libraries partner with academic institutions for health programming. *American Libraries*, 50(5): 51. *Gale Academic OneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A587260987/AONE?u=nysl_oweb&sid=googleScholar&xid=a471ed19.
- Malkin, K. B., & Feingold, S. K. (2014). A library, a nurse, and good health. *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing*, 32(12): 559-561. <https://doi.org/10.1097/CIN.000000000000120>.
- Morgan A. U., D'Alonzo, B. A., Dupuis, R., Whiteman, E.D., Kallen, S., McClintock, A., Fein, J. A., Klusaritz, H., & Cannuscio, C. C. (2018). Public library staff as

- community health partners: Training program design and evaluation. *Health Promotion Practice*, 19(3): 361-368.
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1524839917735304>
- Morgan, A. U., Dupuis, R., D'Alonzo, B., Johnson, A., Graves, A., Brooks, K. L., McClintock, A., Klusaritz, H., Bogner, H., Long, J. A., Grande, D., & Cannuscio, C. C. (2016). Beyond books: Public libraries as partners for population health. *Health Affairs (Project Hope)*, 35(11): 2030-2036.
<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2016.0724>
- Narula, S. K. (2014, April 29). The 5 U. S. counties where racial diversity is highest – and lowest. *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/04/mapping-racial-diversity-by-county/361388/>
- Nutbeam, D., McGill, B., & Premkumar, P. (2018). Improving health literacy in community populations: A review of progress. *Health Promotion International*, 33(5), 901-911. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dax015>
- Philbin, M. M., Parker, C. M., Flaherty, M. G., & Hirsch, J. S. (2019). Public libraries: A community-level resource to advance population health. *Journal of Community Health*, 44(1), 192-199.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-018-0547-4>
- Podair S., & Simon, S. L. (1957). Health education in the public library. *Public Health Reports*, 72(10), 918-920.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2031361/pdf/pubhealthrepori g00142-0068.pdf>
- Queens Public Library. (2022, August 21). In *Wikipedia*.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queens_Public_Library
- Scott, R. (2011). The role of public libraries in community building. *Public Library Quarterly*, 30(3), 191-227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2011.599283>
- Whitney, W., Keselman, A., & Humphreys, B. (2017). Libraries and librarians: Key partners for progress in health literacy research and practice. *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 240: 415-432.
<https://doi.org/10.3233/ISU-170821>

TABLE 1. List of Health-Related Topics

	Topic	Objectives
February	Heart Disease in Women	Understand the risk factors for heart disease Review differences in clinical presentation for women with heart disease and their underrepresentation in heart studies Review medications for treating heart disease
March	Diabetes Prevention and Management	Review lifestyle tips to prevent Type 2 diabetes Outline standard diabetes management Review treatment options including oral meds, new non-insulin injectable medications, and insulin
April	Women's Health 101	Review current screening guidelines for women including mammogram, pap smears, and osteoporosis and other preventative care screenings. Review medication treatment for osteoporosis
May	Pregnancy and Breastfeeding	Discuss tips for a healthy pregnancy and breastfeeding success Review medications to use during pregnancy and lactation

	Topic	Objectives
June	Summer Health and Safety	Review health and safety information for summer months (e.g. beach and sun exposure) Discuss the importance of sunscreen, staying hydrated, and avoiding tick bites.
July	Communicating with Your Healthcare Team	Outline strategies for better communication with your outpatient provider Review workflow and structure of the inpatient setting Communicating with your pharmacist as a healthcare team member
August	Anxiety and Depression 101	Review the signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression Review skills of different types of mental health providers (e.g. social work, psychology, psychiatry) Review medication treatment for anxiety and depression
September	Dementia	Review early warning signs of dementia, strategies for detection, and treatment options.
October	Nutrition: Eating Healthy...Even Around the Holidays	Review national dietary recommendations for intake of micro- and macro-nutrients
November	Planning for Pregnancy and Understanding Fertility	Review strategies to prepare for healthy pregnancy Learn how to know when your body is fertile Outline information for when becoming pregnant is difficult, including specialists to see and medications used