

2013 APHA Annual Meeting & Exposition
PHEHP Poster Session - Monday, November 4, 2013

Think Global, Act Local: Working With Interpreters to Facilitate Bilingual Focus Groups

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Objectives

The participant will be able to:

1. Describe various approaches used by professionals to interpret focus group interviews.
2. Describe the benefits and challenges of interpreter-mediated focus groups.
3. Describe specific steps that can be used to effectively prepare, implement, and validate outcomes of an interpreter-mediated focus group.

Abstract

Focus groups can be an effective tool for assessing needs and capacities, generating ideas and action plans, and fostering community trust and commitment in public health promotion. Barriers to using this method arise when primary languages and cultures differ between public health professionals and the population of interest. Vital information can be lost in single-language focus groups if the participants must speak a secondary language or if the facilitator speaks their language but is not sufficiently knowledgeable about discussion topic issues and related background information. A facilitation team of public health professionals and trained interpreters can work together to simultaneously moderate bilingual focus groups and reap valuable outcomes. The key to success in this partnered effort lies in a carefully planned approach. Some time-honored and recently-piloted methods used for preparing, implementing, and validating outcomes of bilingual focus groups will be presented. Example implementation methods include establishing group rules to accommodate bilingual interpretation during discussions, assigning multiple interpreters to specific facilitators and participants, recording key discussion concepts in each language on flip charts as they emerge, and using the words written on those flip charts to validate translation and foster group consensus. Follow-up recommendations will include subjecting single-language versions of focus group transcripts to the back-translation process and including observer notes recorded during the focus group in triangulation to validate identified themes. Anecdotal illustrations from community-based projects implemented by the authors in global and local settings will be provided.

Poster References

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