

F26.16 Improving Quality of Life: Developing a Psychosocial Survey for Navajo Cancer Patients

Overview

A cancer diagnosis impacts patients' quality of life, and significantly increases the risk for clinical depression and anxiety (distress), which are associated with poorer clinical outcomes and a decrease in quality of life. In recent years, the non-Hispanic White population has experienced decreases in cancer mortality rates, while the American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) population continues to experience climbing mortality rates.

Very little research exists identifying the specific cultural factors contributing to psychosocial (social, emotional, practical, spiritual) needs and protective factors unique to the AIAN cancer population. An urgent need exists in health equity efforts for culturally and contextually adapted psychosocial oncology interventions for the AIAN cancer population. To create effective programs, the psychosocial needs that impact the overall quality of life of the AIAN cancer patient population must first be understood.

The long-term goal of this exploratory mixed methods study is to decrease the psychosocial oncology health disparity among Navajo cancer patients. Interns involved in this project will get experience with research coordination, qualitative data collection and analysis methods, experience working with the Navajo cancer patient population, experience working in a community-engaged research model, and experience working on quantitative data analysis.

What the student will DO and LEARN

The student will be mentored from the beginning, allowing them to gain the necessary skills to feel confident in community-engaged research. This is a mixed-methods study, and therefore, there are both qualitative and quantitative opportunities depending on the student's availability. The first stage of the internship will include conducting the CITI training and teaching how to effectively work with American Indian communities. Students will also be given some key research articles to review so they can understand the foundation for the project based on scientific literature. The student may gain exposure to submitting to IRBs as well as navigating the IRB process on the Navajo Nation. Interns will assist in outreach, as well as coordinating meetings with the Community Advisory Board and communicating with Board members, creating and sending out meeting invites and agendas, taking critical notes during meetings.

After the Community Advisory Board (CAB) is established, the next phase of the study is to conduct semi-structured qualitative interviews. The student will get exposure in the consenting process and assist in coordinating activities necessary to carry out interviews in a clinical/medical setting. The student intern will gain exposure to appropriate record keeping and working with highly private and confidential information. After qualitative analysis, a psychosocial survey will be developed based on qualitative analysis and CAB feedback. Quantitative data collection will then occur with the student intern engaged in collection of survey responses. Working in a clinical/medical setting will be required. Survey responses will be collected followed by quantitative analysis. Dissemination will occur in scientific meetings, on the Navajo Nation, and in the scientific literature. The student may use the research to present a poster at the Undergraduate Research Symposium and may be invited to present at a professional conference with the PI.

Professional dress (business casual) during in-clinic/medical settings and any time engaging with participants or the CAB will be required. High emotional intelligence will be necessary.

Additional benefits

Students will gain hands-on experience at all levels of the research process. Student interns will learn how to carry themselves in a professional manner, receiving mentorship from the PI. The PI seeks students who want to learn and grow and are open to constructive feedback, and also are willing to give feedback to the PI in the learning process. The student intern will learn how to navigate difficult situations, as well as how to effectively communicate with stakeholders at various levels of the research process. Student intern scholars will gain skills to help them succeed in classes, as well as future research projects and gain highly desirable skills that can be used for any future academic and job applications. Students will learn how to conduct outreach, how to manage multiple deadlines at once, how to create agendas for meetings, how to consent participants in a sensitive manner, how to communicate with and navigate the IRB, how to appropriately store data, how to conduct qualitative analysis, how to transcribe semi-structured interviews and input data for analysis. Students will learn how to communicate with stakeholders at all levels of the project (participants, community advisory board, IRB, medical clinic staff, etc). Students will further gain exposure to culturally adapting pre-existing instruments for a specific community (Navajo cancer patient community in this setting), as well as collecting survey responses. The student will learn appropriate channels for outreach for a scientific research study, as well as dissemination (flyers, social media, scientific meetings, etc).

Additional qualifications

QUALIFICATIONSEmotional intelligence. English language proficiency. Dine'/Navajo language proficient a preferred qualification but not required. Familiarity with Dine culture preferred but not required. Student will be mentored but must be a self-starter who is able to work independently and meet deadlines.

Time commitment

6 hrs/week for 30 weeks