

Engagement of community in service delivery

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Results of a community needs assessment and pilot test of a novel HIV cure research training curriculum

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Background: HIV 'cure' or remission research demands scientific literacy for participants and researchers regarding participation. An international collaboration of advocates, NGOs and researchers has created a curriculum to facilitate understanding and scientific cooperation. Iterative evaluation with intended audiences is being conducted with community groups during curriculum development.

Methods: During the period of August -October 2014, participants attending HIV cure research training sessions completed an online HIV cure research literacy needs assessment. The needs assessment questionnaire fed into the development of a comprehensive HIV cure research literacy curriculum. Individuals who completed the needs assessment questionnaire were invited to participate in pilots of three different curriculum modules. Participants evaluated the content and usefulness of modules, assessed HIV cure research 'literacy' levels and sought real-time feedback from participants to develop and refine subsequent training modules.

Results: Of the n = 42 respondents, 40 (95.2%) found the curriculum module very useful and 1 (2.3%) found it somewhat useful, as opposed to not very useful or not at all useful (1 answer missing). Most participants found the module very easy (32/42; 76.2%) or somewhat easy (12/42; 28.6%) to understand, as opposed to not very easy or not at all easy. In-person talks or forums (27/42; 64.2%) were the preferred method of learning, compared with webinars/conference calls (5/42; 11.9%) or self-paced web-based learning programs (8/42; 19.0%). Participants preferred training topics by the community included therapeutic vaccines (31/42; 73.8%), participation in HIV cure research (27/42; 64.2%) and ethical issues (26/42; 61.9% of participants).

Conclusions: The needs assessment of the curriculum effort showed the usefulness of the training and desires to increase community 'literacy' around HIV cure research. Based on the results of the pilot tests and needs assessment questionnaire, 15 curriculum modules were developed and scaled-up by scientific and community liaisons. International training program implementation includes PowerPoint teaching sets, pre-/post-test assessments, online and in-person presentations as well as participatory activities. The curriculum can strengthen community capacity to participate in and make decisions around HIV cure research. However, greater efforts to systematically roll out the literacy tool is needed in diverse community populations.