

Working with Vulnerable Populations

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*Center for Reducing Risks in Vulnerable
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Vulnerable: Populations and People

- Vulnerable Populations:
 - Vulnerable by virtue of group status
- Vulnerable People:
 - Focus on the individual

Vulnerable defined:

- At risk for poor physical, psychological or social health. (Aday, 2001)
- People in society who bear the excess burden of disease. (RWJ, 2007)
- Social groups with increased relative risk or susceptibility to health-related problems (↑ mortality rates, ↓ life expectancy, ↓ access to care, ↓ quality of life). (UCLA, 2007)

Who is Vulnerable (health care):

- Greater than average risk of developing health problems:
 - Ethnic/racial minorities
 - Low socio-economic status
 - Children, women, elderly
 - Immigrants
 - People subject to discrimination or stigma
 - Homeless

Vulnerable and *Health Disparities*

- “Racial or ethnic differences in the quality of health care not due to access-related factors, preference or clinical needs...”
- Reasons include: stereotyping, bias, discrimination, or uncertainty.

(IOM, 2003)

Translational Research

- Emphasis on extending basic discoveries (physical, biologic, and behavioral sciences) into the clinical realm.
- Increase communication and collaboration across disciplines.

Intersect between translational research and vulnerable populations

- Vulnerable populations may not be the focus of the translational research.
- Research findings may not represent the experience of vulnerable populations.
- Research needs to translate into the communities to impact vulnerable populations.

Center for Reducing Risks in Vulnerable Populations

- National Institute of Nursing Research funded P30 Center 2004-2009
 1. Advance the science for biobehavioral health for vulnerable populations,
 2. Reduce disparities in disease and illness,
 3. Support research training by providing core services and resources.

Who is Vulnerable (health care):

- Greater than average risk of developing health problems:
 - Ethnic minorities (African Americans)
 - Low socio-economic status
 - Children, women, elderly
 - Immigrants
 - People subject to discrimination or stigma
 - Homeless

(CRRVP emphasis in **bold**)

Center for Reducing Risks in Vulnerable Populations

- Three research core facilities
 - Multiethnic Emphasis Core
 - Barbara Dancy, JoEllen Wilbur
 - Biobehavioral Methods Core
 - Eileen Collins, (Janet Larson)
 - Development and Dissemination Core
 - Julie Zerwic

Center for Reducing Risks in Vulnerable Populations

- Three research core facilities
 - **Multiethnic Emphasis Core**
 - **Research seminars**
 - Acculturation, racism/discrimination, effective measures of SES, community participatory research
 - **Community Advisory Board**
 - Biobehavioral Methods Core
 - Development and Dissemination Core

Center for Reducing Risks in Vulnerable Populations

- Three research core facilities
 - Multiethnic Emphasis Core
 - **Biobehavioral Methods Core**
 - **Instrument Bank**
 - **Data Bank**
 - **Biological lab**
 - Development and Dissemination Core

Center for Reducing Risks in Vulnerable Populations

- Three research core facilities
 - Multiethnic Emphasis Core
 - Biobehavioral Methods Core
 - **Development and Dissemination Core**
 - **Pilot study funding**
 - **Publications**
 - **Presentations**

Pilot studies

- Goal:
 - to stimulate research that addresses the needs of vulnerable populations.
- Supports research to facilitate competitive NIH submissions:
 - Novice investigators
 - Midcareer investigators who are shifting focus to vulnerable populations

Eileen Collins



- **Purpose:**
 - Tailor and test the psychometric properties of a questionnaire to assess physical activity in people with spinal cord injury.
- **Vulnerable sample:**
 - 40% African American and Latinos.
- **Collaborators:**
 - Exercise physiologist, methodologist, statistician.

Sandra Burgener



- **Purpose:**
 - Develop and test the effectiveness of a wellness intervention (Taiji exercises, cognitive behavioral therapies, support group) for persons with dementia.
- **Vulnerable sample:**
 - Older adults.
- **Collaborators:**
 - Exercise physiologist, expert in Taiji, statistician.

Barbara McFarlin



- **Purpose:**
 - To develop and test a new ultrasound technique to detect cervical ripening (earlier phase of labor).
- **Vulnerable sample:**
 - Study done using an animal model. 19% of African American women have preterm births.
- **Collaborators:**
 - Nurse midwife, Ultrasonographer, Bioengineers, Physicist.

Issues in the Translation of Research

- Access to Vulnerable populations is limited
 - Federal Regulations
 - Willingness to participate

Federal Regulations (45CFR46)

- Equitable selection of subjects
 - Vulnerable populations: ...such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled, economically or educationally handicapped.
 - Subpart B: pregnant women, fetuses, and in-vitro fertilization.
 - Subpart C: prisoners.
 - Subpart D: children.

Issues in the Translation of Research

- The research has limited participation by vulnerable populations
 - Demanding protocols
 - Over-researched
 - Communities want to know what is in it for them.
 - Life-events overwhelm, so value of research participation is perceived as limited.

Issues in the Translation of Research

- Validity of research findings questionable when participation by vulnerable populations has been limited.
- Reliability and validity of measures.
 - Health literacy of the sample
 - Response formats

Strategies:

- Research targeted towards vulnerable populations:
 - Use members of targeted group to recruit and retain subjects.
 - Collaborate with community programs to share resources and information.
 - Know the community (formal and informal).
 - Examine cultural beliefs, norms, and values.

(Flaskerud et al, 1998)