



Operation TRIM (Taking Responsibility by Informing Minds for a Better Tomorrow): Implementing a Condom Distribution Program in Peach County, Georgia



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Abstract

Introduction: Improving physical health in early life is crucial in substantiating quality health and well-being later in life. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are a major public health issue in today's society as STDs in the public health realm are viewed as hidden epidemics. The impact of STDs has no particular prey as it can affect individuals regardless of race, age, and sexual orientation. Therefore, interventions over the years have focused on primary and secondary prevention measures to reduce the number of new and existing cases. This project intended to implement a condom distribution program that delivers health education and promotion material to members of the community in an unconventional setting. The purpose of this structural-level program was to equip trusted members of the community with knowledge regarding STDs to inform the minds of those they encounter about safe sex practices and the severity of the health threat. **Methodology:** From February 6-March 6, 2014, eleven Hair Care establishments (Barber Shops and Beauty Salons) were identified via the "yellow pages" and windshield surveillance. Convenience sampling tactics were applied to acquire intervention participants (Barbers and Barber Shop owners) from three Barber Shops. Each participating venue received Safe Sex Care packets and County STD statistics. **Findings:** Qualitative data discovered that the current state of knowledge and comprehension among participants were limited and the level of discomfort talking about STDs were evident.

Introduction

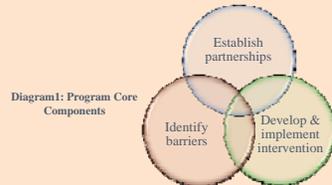
Improving physical health in early life is crucial in substantiating quality health and well-being later in life. Many environmental inflicted health problems are associated with socioeconomic factors such as poverty and a lack of essential resources due to income and education. However, increasing access to health services during early life stages can change the outlook of physical health during later stages. This will as a byproduct assist in altering the development of lifestyle-related diseases such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases, also known as STDs. STDs are a major public health issue in today's society as STDs in the public health realm are viewed as hidden epidemics. Hidden epidemics that are not easily solved due to the rooted nature of human behavior and fundamental societal problems.

Peach County, the youngest of 159 counties in the state of Georgia has a population of 27,622 residents spanning over 151 square miles (See Figure 1). Among this rural population, the rates of STDs have impacted the mobilization of this community over time. According to Peach County's Health Status Report from 2007-2011, Peach County ranked 5th highest for rates of Chlamydia cases, 17th for rates of Gonorrhea cases, and 32nd for rates of Syphilis. Of the 27,622 residents, Black/African Americans residents make up 45.7% while Whites/ European Americans make up 51.4%. Among the Black/African American population of 18-24 year olds, STD rates of Chlamydia (1,060.8 per 100,000) and Gonorrhea cases (349.8 per 100,000) were alarmingly higher than their Whites/European American counterparts (with Chlamydia cases of 108.6 per 100,000 and Gonorrhea cases of 11.2 per 100,000). Therefore, this project has been conceptualized to help reduce the rising rates of STDs and prevent further transmission.

Program Design

Specific Aim:

The goal of implementing this structural-level distribution program is to assist in reducing and/or preventing STDs in high-risk communities, by providing health education and health promotion material to residents of the community in a comfortable but untraditional setting. As, this project was erected to promote health and wellness through the provisional use of condoms for those engaging in sexual activity, in an attempt to protect residents of Peach County, GA against health threats such as untreated STDs as well as work to decrease the number of new HIV cases. In order to achieve this goal, these core components of the project were employed:



Setting

- Hair Care establishments (Barbershops and Beauty Salons) in Peach County, GA.



Figure 1: Illustration of Peach County, GA

Participants (Sample Recruitment)

- Program participants were identified via the "yellow pages" and a windshield surveillance of the community
 - Recruitment was conducted using a convenience sampling technique
 - Sites were given an Operation TRIM letter of participation and information flyer
 - After several follow-ups, three sites expressed interest in the project.

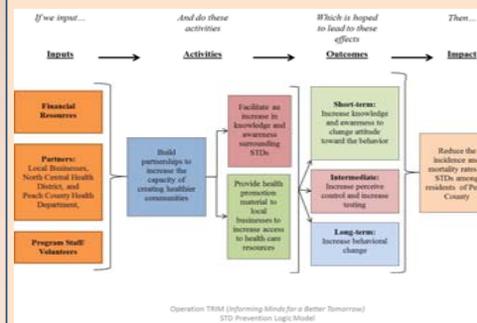
Materials for Health Education & Promotion

- Resources utilized in this project were developed and/or acquired from the North Central Health District.
 - STD 101 PowerPoint presentation
 - Standard Latex condoms
 - Trojan® Magnum XL lubricated condoms
 - Lubricants
 - Participant recruitment letter and flyer



Figure 2: Safe Sex Care Packets

Figure 3: Program Logic Model



Findings

- Eleven (11) Hair Care establishments were identified via observational viewing of Peach County and a "yellow page" search (January 2014- February 2014)
- Ten (10) sites were approached and given an informative letter of participation and an Operation TRIM flyer (February 6, 2014)
 - All establishments except Hair Care B&B 2A
 - Hair Care B&B 2A refused services during first site visit as establishment did not perceive the health threat to be of concern for the clients they serve
 - Population demographics of establishment were European Americans over the age of 40
- Of the sites contacted during participant recruitment and project implementation, observations noted were:

Body Language	Responsiveness	Current Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the approach, establishment personnel were attentive at the point of greetings. However, it was noticed that personnel lowered their heads (as a sign of being timid or shy) during the delivery of Operation TRIM's information pitch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusted business owners and personnel hesitated in coming forth to take action in the project. Take Hair Care B&B 1A for instance, during the second site visit, the owner tried to blend in with the patrons of the establishment and even mentioning that the owner stepped out the back door. However, after stating that free condom packets were going to be left so that owner can offer for distribution to clientele, the individual greets with a shake stating that he was in fact the owner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current state of knowledge and comprehension among Hair Care Specialist regarding STDs was not evaluated as health education was not delivered. However, there was a notable example that demonstrated limited knowledge of who is at-risk for contracting and transmitting STDs. • It was noticed from Hair Care B&B 2A that STDs was not of concern or an issue for individuals over the age of 40. Personnel felt that the services provided by the project would not be useful.

Table 1: Field Note Observations during Program Implementation

Discussion

In today's society, socioeconomic factors, access to healthcare and individual behavior play a vital role in the mental perception of individuals (especially among African American males) in achieving "good" health. In the African American community, the mental perception of health can be often correlated with trust issues with healthcare providers, social influences or the premise of susceptibility and severity of a health concern. This fact was found to be true in the results obtained during participant recruitment and program implementation. Often times the perceived severity and susceptibility, regarding health-related conditions are left unnoticed as environmental barriers such as pride hinders the intent to seek medical care/services. As a result, a health concern is left unknown and progresses into a non-rehabilitating condition. Therefore, the following recommendations are being made to improve and sustain the program: a) develop action plans that mediate derailed attempts in program implementation and progression, and b) develop a sustainability plan to maintain community-level relationships.

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