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 precept as it can affect individuals regardless of race, age, and sexual orientation. Therefore, interventions over the years have been 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 the prevention of the activity 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. Improving physical health in early life is essential in substantiating quality health and well-being later in life. Many environmental and 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 be a monumental 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 rootless nature of human behavior and fundamental societal problems.

Peach County, the youngest of 159 counties in the state of Georgia has a population of 72,622 residents spanning over 151 square miles of land (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 22nd for rates of Syphilis. The 27,622 residents, Black/African American residents make up 45.7% while Whites/European Americans residents make up 48.5% while White/European American make up 51.6%. Among the Black/African American population of 16-24 years old, STD rates of Chlamydia (1,068.8 per 100,000) and Gonorrhea cases (34.6 per 100,000) were alarmingly higher than their White/European American counterparts (with Chlamydia cases of 106.6 per 100,000 and Gonorrhea cases of 1.2 per 100,000). Therefore, this project has been conceptualized to help reduce the rising rates of STDs and prevent further transmission.

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 preventative 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:

Program Design

Setting

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

Methodology

Finding

• Eleven (11) Hair Care establishments were identified via observatory 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 Bldg 24, Hair Care Bldg 24 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:

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 promise 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 in environmental barriers such as pride hinder the intent to seek medical care/services. As a result, a health concern is left unknowing 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.

References


Acknowledgments

• Mercer University’s Master of Public Health Program
• North Central Health District
• Dr. Jomma Smith (Ophtalmic Preceptor)
• Ms. Suzie Lamarca (Academic Advisor)