Using Community Health Profiles

Dianne Patychuk
Toronto Public Health

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Community Health Profiles: Purpose

- Facilitate access to information for health planning with the overall goal of producing action to reduce health inequalities.

- Health inequalities: differences in health related to socio-economic conditions that can be influenced by policies, strategies, services

- Measure of success of efforts is a reduction in health inequalities between areas over time

Community Health Profiles: Key Users

- Health service/health promotion/health planning organizations and partnerships

- Neighbourhood Action Groups

- Funders

- Community Health Researchers

- Others: legal clinics, Job, income, education, food access, etc.)

- Coalitions

- Decision makers

Community Health Profiles: Key Uses

- allocate resources
- write grant proposals
- identify underserved areas
- decide where to locate service sites
- identify strategic issues and set priorities
- advocate for social investments/public goods
- provide a common evidence base/level playing field for group decision-making
- comparisons within and between cities

Community Health Profiles: Outcomes 1

- transparent "evidence"
- decision-making consensus
- knowledge as power
- from "utilization-based" to needs to assets
- community information infrastructure
- reliable measures
- research, evaulation and case studies

Community Health Profiles: Outcomes 2

- service equity

- removal of access barriers

- successful grant applications

- narrowed health gap between areas and socioeconomic groups

- disparity reduction targets & tracking

- transfer of "what works" between communities

- neighbourhood & community user engagement in creating knowledge, deciding its meaning and its dissemination

Community Health Profiles: Story 1

The profiles were used by Public Health to decide where to locate prenatal nutrition programs to areas with the highest number and highest concentration of births to low income families; to identify priority areas for sexual health promotion actions and partnerships; to locate sexual health clinics where they were most needed; to define geographic service areas of equal need; to allocate staff to achieve service equity; to identify the languages most needed for translation for different age groups in different areas of the city; and to hire peer community workers with knowledge of the language and experiences of diverse immigrant and ethnoracial communities.

Community Health Profiles: Story 2

The Board of Directors of a community centre decided to change the planned location of their new centre from a high income area where the Board members lived, to an area with many low income families with children and youth in a different part of the agency service area.

Community Health Profiles: Story 3

With profiles well describing the needs of community in which they were located, a community legal clinic didn't have to spend money on buying and analysing census data. They used their limited planning resources on compiling data on their own clients and learning more about the specific legal needs of recent immigrants. When they matched the information on who was coming in their door with the needs of people shown by the community profiles, they learned that they were missing many groups whose most basic rights to housing, social assistance, health care and education were being denied. They increased their outreach to new groups that needed their services the most.

What we're doing to make information useful

- created various "nested" geographic levels so that health indicators could be provided that would be too unstable to use at a neighbourhood level

- electronic access

- describe quality and stability of indicators

- identify magnitude of difference for each area compared to total rate (e.g. a relatively high area rate could be 1.2 or two times greater that the city rate)

What we're doing to make information useful

- provide various formats (maps, tables, text)
- printouts readable in black & white or in colour
- incude socio-demographic and service data that are needed to explain health differences and respond to health needs
- provide workshops and create tools for users
- feedback mechanism for help with accessing information on the site or for suggesting additions and improvements

What can we do to make the site and the information more useful?

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Visit Feedback tab on www.torontohealthprofiles.ca