

Your Library, My Expertise:

Creating a Research Project Through Collaboration

Rachel Stark, M.S.
Kaiser Permanente Northern California

Preeti Oza, P.T., Ph.D.
University of the Pacific

Jamie Paiva
Sacramento Public Library

Introduction

Through multi-institutional collaboration, the Sacramento Public Library was able to provide a volunteer program designed to benefit members of the community who were stroke survivors and Traumatic Brain Injury survivors. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) affects over 2.5 million people in the United States. Every year, over 795,000 people in the United States have a stroke. Therapeutic volunteering activities at the Public Library will promote functional movements, improve cognitive skills and increase social participation. Stroke survivors will improve functional activities such as sit-to-stand, walking, wheelchair propulsion, sitting balance, standing balance, carrying objects, etc. Cognitive skills will be enhanced when volunteers use alphabetical and/or Dewey Decimal System to organize books, DVDs, music and while finding missing/duplicate items. Additionally the therapeutic volunteering tasks will promote improved eye-hand coordination, spatial/environmental awareness, navigation skills around obstacles and patrons of the library. Besides helping improve physical and cognitive abilities, the program will enable socializing with other stroke survivors and the patrons of the library; thereby improving confidence and psychosocial skills. In addition, the program will promote participation in the community and improved quality of life for stroke survivors.

Building the Team

This collaboration came about when Rachel Stark, a medical librarian who had previously worked at the Sacramento Public Library and the University of the Pacific, contacted Jamie Pavia, who had created a volunteer program specifically for stroke survivors. Pavia welcomed a medical librarian and licensed physical therapists who taught at the University of the Pacific to her project and by combining the expertise of all three, the program was able to develop into a volunteer program for community members with TBI as well as stroke. Initial meeting for project discussion were held between Jamie, Preeti, and Rachel to discuss the logistics, feasibility and concerns regarding the possible risks for injuries or falls for survivors of brain injury and stroke. This meeting being face-to-face was most helpful to understanding the roles of all the team members and plan details of the project. Albert Santa Cruz, student from University of the Pacific, participated and assisted in data collection.

VOLUNTEER COMMENTARY

"The most impressive improvement, possibly, is my new ability to concentrate at length under pressure. Last semester, when sitting for a quiz or exam, even with significant accommodations, my anxiety level was quite high. I knew I was attempting to perform a task I could not handle. Now, when seated for an exam under the exact same conditions and accommodations, I stay calm, focus on the problem at hand, and work steadily to completion. Even though I still have testing accommodations, I am within ten minutes of finishing my exams within the time frame set for non-disabled students." --Ben Uchytel



Partnerships & Communication

The goal of the partnership was to develop a volunteering program to promote social participation, empowerment and independence after stroke or brain injury. Therapeutic volunteering program was piloted at the Arcade Library in Sacramento, California from May-December 2015.

To create a powerful collaboration between multiple institutions, it is extremely helpful to have one designated team member as the project coordinator.

Outreach is extremely important to this project. Having staff members from the Public Library who are willing and able to attend meetings and classes that project members who were unable to get off work during those times was extremely helpful to recruitment.

Academic and Public libraries share common geographic areas and overlapping communities. Both can benefit from a program like this, and can ensure that community members have access to these programs at the location most convenient to them.

Librarians can collaborate with various institutions in order to provide similar programs. Reaching out to academic institutions or local medical facilities can help provide resources to create a successful program.

Collecting & Keeping Participants

Developing the Program utilizing the medical knowledge and expertise of a physical therapist ensured that the program was safe and helped to provide a medical legitimacy that helped attract participants. Harnessing the knowledge and ability of a medical librarian to translate medical jargon into library jargon and vice versa allowed the public library staff to feel more comfortable with the program.

Designing volunteer jobs that ensured the volunteers were safe as they were doing work that is hopefully beneficial is essential to the success of the program and helped to ensure that the public library administration that the program was safe for staff and community members.

Program Benefits

There is value in designing a program for volunteers with TBI and stroke survivors, as they are members of the library's community who might be underserved.

Volunteer programs that require medical expertise are an excellent opportunity for academic and clinical practitioners to volunteer their time in the community and build stronger relationships between their institutions and the community they serve. These kinds of volunteer programs can also provide research opportunities for faculty and students.

Participants in the program have expressed positive feedback about the program and some have explicitly stated that participation in the program has helped them at school and has allowed them to improve certain skills such as concentration and focus.

Contact Information

Rachel Keiko Stark, M.S., (707) 624-4354, Rachel.k.stark@kp.org
Preeti Oza, P.T., Ph.D., (209) 946-2972, poza@pacific.edu

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of Albert Santa Cruz, an intern who worked with us.

References

- <http://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/data/index.html>
- http://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/get_the_facts.html
- <http://www.cdc.gov/stroke/facts.htm>