

Creating A Safe Environment for Youth in Research Early in the Research Cycle: The UBC Youth Research Advisory Panel

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Introduction

The current ways of engaging youth in research can be harmful to youth and may not meaningfully involve youth when informing outcomes and impacts of the research. The lack of safety, denial of people's experiences as valid, lack of representation, age bias and stigma surrounding mental health are all inhibitors to meaningful youth engagement in research. This presentation will outline how to safely engage marginalized youth, two-spirit, queer, IBPOC and LGBTQIA+ youth throughout the research process when studying mental health.

Objectives

To combat the exclusion of youth voices and the transactional nature of the current youth engagement work being done in research, the UBC Youth Research Advisory Panel (YRAP) was designed to allow youth and researchers to co-design research surrounding youth health. This project attempted to create a process for youth involvement in supporting researchers with grant proposals and leading with their lived experiences and knowledge of the challenges the healthcare system presents to patients. Our project attempted a co-creation relationship between youth and researchers to bridge the gap between the views and priorities of the researchers with the needs and priorities of the youth.

Approach/Methods

The youth on this panel (n=10 youth with lived and/or living experience) work collaboratively with researchers to provide direct feedback and edits to research grant proposals, including the co-design of research questions, methodology and knowledge translation activities. The youth on the panel have full discretion over which researcher they feel they can support through continued interaction or a letter of support for the grant submissions. Panels inform, shape and create diverse research projects that have direct impacts on youth health in British Columbia, Canada, and beyond.

Results

Q Several factors have been identified for success by the YRAP for meaningful engagement of youth with researchers at the early stages of the research process, specifically grant writing. This includes but is not limited to:

- Articulating ground rules clearly and ensuring agreement of all members at the beginning of the process;
- Creating a safe space where everyone feels comfortable through fostering an equal power, group accountability, and respectful environment;

- Optimizing different means of communication including talk, message group, anonymous survey on YRAP site;
- Ensuring proper use of pronouns;!
- Meaningful Land acknowledgments;
- Facilitating greater accessibility;
- Discussion and naming of microaggressions when they occur;

Conclusion

When youth are meaningfully engaged within research it allows for the free exchange of ideas amongst youth and researchers. It will empower youth to have a voice in relevant research processes such as formulating a grant proposal and the execution of the research procedures. Meaningful youth engagement early in the research cycle allows for more voices to be heard in a safer manner and for research to be translated into action more quickly. The learnings from the YRAP have helped research become more relevant and applicable to the daily lives of young people.

