Community Research Ethics Training for Mental Health Researchers and Black Community Leaders Engaged in Partnerships

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Many researchers are adopting community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches to address health disparities. Using these approaches for ameliorating mental health problems in black communities requires the development of cross-cultural competencies to mend the scars left by past breaches of ethical practices in black communities. We developed a training model to guide mental health researchers (MHRs) and black community-based organization (CBO) leaders through the phases of partnership. We devoted one module to helping partners better understand ethical considerations unique to CBPR and articulate their own views during a partnership retreat. We pilot-tested this strategy with 4 partnership teams who had completed our precursor modules. We collected qualitative and quantitative implementation and outcome data. These data provide evidence of the value of our training model for ensuring that CBO leaders and researchers are better prepared to resolve the unique ethical challenges of CBPR and the need to recognize community expertise. The retreat format created a multi-learner environment for partners to practice ethical decision-making in research involving black communities and deliberate over case studies through cooperative learning exercises.

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