

# Facilitating Peer Research Associates (PRAs) to be HIV Champions: Experiences and Lessons Learnt from the CHAMP Study

**Tuesday November 13, 2012**

**OHTN Research Conference  
“Research With Real-life Impact”**

**Christian Hui & Henry Luyombya  
Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment (CAAT)**

# CBR: From GIPA to MEIPA

- Since 2006, **Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment (CAAT)** has conducted numerous CBR to improve the quality of life of immigrants, refugees, and non-status people living with HIV (IRN-PHAs).
- Underpinned by the principles of social justice and equity, CAAT has gone beyond the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA) principle to adopt **Meaningful Engagement and Involvement of PHAs (MEIPA)** in CBR.
- IRN-PHAs participated as research team members – **peer research associates (PRAs)** and advisory committee.

# Beyond GPA: Strength-based MEIPA in CBR

1

- Value PRAs' lived experiences
- Build on PRAs' transferrable skills & networks

2

- Assess PRAs' research capacity
- Identify PRAs' research learning needs

3

- Provide ongoing research training
- Engage PRAs in all stages of research

4

- Engage PRAs in KTE activities
- KTE participation resources → PRAs

# Background: CHAMP Study (2011-2014)



Community Champions HIV/AIDS

Advocates Mobilization Project is:

- An intervention study to pilot and test two interventions
  - Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT)
  - -Social Justice Capacity Building (SJCBC)
- Aims at developing community HIV champions to address stigma & other social justice issues
- Engage ethno-racial PHA and Non-PHA leaders
  - Asian (East, SE & S. Asian)
  - Black (African & Caribbean)
  - Latino (Hispanic)
- 6 PRAs hired, 2 from each community

# Holistic Research Training

## STAGE SPECIFIC TRAINING:

- Overall understanding of CBR
- Training organized to reflect the order of research activities (e.g., outreach, recruitment, data collection, etc.)

## 3 DOMAINS OF TRAINING:

- Cognitive (knowledge)
- Affective (emotions, feelings, attitude)
- Experiential (practical skills)

**PRA  
training**

## INTEGRATION OF SELF-CARE

- Strategies for anticipated / potential hostility
- Peer support and team building

## LEARNING THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

- Active engagement in all research activities
- Active engagement in KTE

# Factors that enabled PRA championship

- Ongoing mentoring support & a safe space to voice concerns
- Research mentors' flexibility to accommodate PRA needs
- Motivation: Learning new skills through paid employment
- Social meetings for debriefing and interaction
- Equitable & meaningful participation in trainings & planning activity

“The research team invested in team-building activities which allowed team members to develop a strong bond with fellow members and to commit to the project. Reflective exercises have assisted the team to find ways to recognize strengths and areas to improve on.”

# PRAs reflections

- Social Support:

“Aside from being a great learning experience, working along other PRAs have allowed me to build an informal social support network with one another where we understand the challenges and concerns we face in life.”

- Community Development:

“I have learnt that despite of HIV stigma which can be so prevalent in our own ethno-racial communities, it is possible to find like-minded individuals who are willing to learn about HIV and assist them to become community champions on anti HIV stigma work.”

# PRAs Reflections

- Self-Efficacy and Empowerment:

“This project has helped me discover a new path for my personal growth that I wasn't aware I could achieve before.”

- Professional Development:

“CHAMP has opened doors for me. Since I became a PRA, I have been able to obtain employment at an ASO, participated in KTE activities of another research project. I have also had opportunities to learn more about ways to apply for CBR grants.”



# April 2012: PRAs presenting at CAHR, Montreal



# Benefits of Engaging in All Research Activities: Learning ACT & SJCB

“The ACT training allowed me to understand where others are coming from in terms of how they handle their life experiences. On a personal level, I feel ACT has helped me to better deal with challenges and not react in a negative manner.”

“The SJCB training has helped me to relate to people and understand community work better. Overall, it has assisted me to be better equipped for my role as a community champion as I help build a more equitable society.”

# PRAs Reflection

## **Affirmation:**

“On a personal level, my involvement with CHAMP reaffirms the reason why I am involved with HIV work. Having the opportunity to observe the growth of the participants in their process of becoming HIV champions and to interact with them for monthly data-gathering purposes and at networking sessions have been a truly affirmative experience.”

# CHAMPS PRA Capacity Building: Lessons Learned

- Engaging PRAs in all stages of research promote MEIPA principles
- PRA involvement in research interventions enhance self efficacy and personal development as community champions
- Multi-faceted capacity building & holistic training approach that attends to skill development, self care, team building is effective in building PRA Champions

# Acknowledgements

- Funding from Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR)
- Other partners:
  - Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN)
  - Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC)
- Research Participants, Project Advisory Committee team & key informants
- **Research Team:**
  - Alan Li, Regent Park Community Health Centre
  - Alex Ciro Bisignano, Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment
  - Amanuel Tesfamichael, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention
  - Constantine Cabarios, Asian Community AIDS Services
  - Christian Hui, Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment
  - Dale Maitland, Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment
  - Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale – University of Windsor
  - Fanta Ongoiba, Africans in Partnership Against AIDS
  - Francisco Corroy, Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment
  - Jack Kapac, University of Windsor
  - Josephine P. Wong, Ryerson University
  - Kenneth Fung, Toronto Western Hospital/University Health Network
  - Kenneth Poon, Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment
  - Mateusz Zurowski, Toronto Western/University Health Network
  - Omer Abulghani, Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention
  - Rene Lopez, Centre for Spanish-Speaking Peoples

# Thank You!



Contacts:

CHAMP Research Study

Henry Luyombya

hluyombya@ohsn.on.ca

Tel. 416.642. 6486 ext 2265

[www.hivimmigration.ca](http://www.hivimmigration.ca)

Facebook.com/HIVimmigration

Twitter: @HIVimmigration