

**“Bradford Community Immunization Access Assessment:
Creating a Vaccine Access Network”**

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ATP 2016 Project Outline

Project focus: In an effort to innovate, partner, and invest in building community capacity in Appalachia, the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford will identify and evaluate community factors influencing access to recommended immunizations, assess the feasibility for the creation of a community resource network for increasing immunization access, and propose formative pilot strategies to create a Vaccine Access Network (VAN) to improve access and limit perceived barriers to immunization within the Bradford, PA community.

Project details:

Course (s): NUR 1401: Nursing Research; NUR 1404: Community Health Nursing

Instructor(s): Dr. Lisa Fiorentino; Dr. Tammy Haley

Community Partner(s): The McKean County Collaborative Board is a community-improvement partnership comprised of parents, citizens, elected officials, and representatives from the health, business, human service, faith-based, and education sectors. While the McKean county Collaborative Board is identified as a single community partner, the composition of the Board is such that input will be gained from a wide variety of community agencies and the impact will be broad reaching as the results are disseminated by the member participants.

Need: Health equals wealth. While this may be an oversimplification, the overall health of a community can typically be linked to the economic health of the area. With an estimated 32.7% of Bradford city residents living at or below the poverty level, the potential risks for poor health are much greater than those of McKean County, PA (16.6% poverty) or the state of Pennsylvania overall (13.6%)¹. Within the top ten leading causes of death, in 2013, 56,979 deaths nationally were attributed to flu and pneumonia². Following poverty trends, the rate of death from flu and pneumonia are noted to be higher in McKean County than in Pennsylvania overall^{3,4}. Lost work, health impairment, or death due to vaccine preventable illnesses such as flu or pneumonia can have a dramatic impact on impoverished rural communities such as Bradford.

Immunizations are a key public health measure to help assure healthier communities. With recent changes in healthcare coverage due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), most vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) are now covered without cost sharing by in-network providers, but the new regulations do not guarantee adequacy of payment for providers. Medicare and Medicaid will also provide for most ACIP recommended immunizations. However, coverage does not guarantee easy access to immunization or provider services. Providers can choose the types of coverage to accept, and they are not required to maintain vaccines for administration in the office setting. External agencies such as pharmacies may be used to administer vaccines, but many are considered out-of-network, thereby limiting access and reimbursement. This may lead to confusion on the part of the consumer and may translate to gaps in vaccination coverage and missed opportunities to maintain vaccination status.

Current ACIP guidelines provide recommendations for adult immunizations.⁵ In McKean County, the 2015 Community Health Needs Assessment identified that access to adult immunizations as a top community health need identified by the community survey respondents. For many small rural medical practices, the cost and associated maintenance required to properly maintain vaccine supplies may be prohibitive. Recent closures of a publically funded clinic in the community have limited access to HPV and Hepatitis A & B vaccination; additional limitations in the Pennsylvania Department of Health services have further reduced access to many other previously available immunization services. In the Bradford community, no local provider currently carries all recommended vaccinations and some local providers do not carry any vaccinations, potentially making the process of accessing immunization services seem more cumbersome than beneficial for those in need.

Number and description of planned meeting with the community partner.

July 2016: At least once during the month of July, project faculty will meet with the McKean County Collaborative Board to discuss assessment goals, set priorities, and finalize fall meeting dates and expectations.

August 2016: ATP student project team leaders will be identified, and small group meetings will be held with team leaders and project faculty to review roles, obligations, and expectations.

September 2016: 1) Skype meeting with Kostas Skordas to discuss ARC role and mission.
2) All student participants/ATP project team leaders, community partner members will meet at least once to review planned assessment, timeline, roles/responsibilities, and goals of the ARC and the intersection of the goals of the project. Revisions will be identified and integrated as needed based on the discussions with the full project team.

October 2016: Preliminary project findings and network drafts will be reviewed by community partners and the ATP project team in preparation for presentation of preliminary findings at Penn-York Undergraduate Research Conference. Feedback will be sought from the community partner for improvement in the project presentation. The project findings will be presented to the community civic organization.

November 2016: Community partner representatives and ATP project team will meet to discuss lessons learned from Penn-York and review plans for ATP Conference presentation. Project updates will be provided and feedback generated about the process thus far and next steps will be discussed.

December 2016: Students will develop a poster and conference presentation for the ATP meetings in Washington, D.C., December, 2016.

Concise overview of the project, including its central focus:

With the evolution of healthcare, many changes have occurred that have caused confusion for consumers. The ability of individuals to maintain currency with recommended immunizations is important for the health of the community. With recent local and regional changes in vaccine

clinic availability, this strategic, collaborative, project with clearly defined outcomes to achieve optimum impact within the region, seeks to assess the available community assets for the provision of recommended immunizations, the community needs for immunization, and barriers which limit access or availability of recommended immunizations within the Bradford community. With this information, and in collaboration with the McKean County Collaborative Board, the feasibility of creating a VAN will be assessed. Accountability will be assured through the development of formative pilot strategies for the creation of a VAN in the Bradford community to create a sustainable provider network serving to strengthen local healthcare capacity and infrastructure. See Logic Model (Appendix A).

Utilizing Community Based Participatory Research methods, students from the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford will work with the McKean County Collaborative Board to identify and investigate community resources to meet current national immunization recommendations with a focus on identifying the current needs, strengths, and available assets of the Bradford community. Acceptability and accessibility of available services will be evaluated. Capitalizing on the identified assets, we will assess the feasibility for the creation of a community resource network for increasing immunization access, and propose formative pilot strategies for the creation of a Vaccine Access Network (VAN) in the Bradford community to create a sustainable provider network serving to strengthen local healthcare capacity and infrastructure.

Course Guidelines and Project Goals:

The ARC 2016-2020 Five-year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia's Opportunities identifies Goal 2: Increase the education, knowledge, skills, and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia. Action Objective no. 6 [Use proven public health practices and establish sustainable clinical services to address health conditions that affect the Region's economic competitiveness] and no. 7 [Develop and support sustainable programs that remove barriers to participating in the workforce] are directly impacted by this project.

Further, Goal 5: Build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development. Action Objective no. 2 [Empower and support next-generation leaders and encourage authentic engagement in local and regional economic and community development]; no. 3 [Strengthen the capacity of community organizations and institutions to articulate and implement a vision for sustainable, transformative community change], and no. 5 [Develop and support networks, partnerships, and other models of collaboration that catalyze public, private, and nonprofit action for community impact] will be addressed through the use of University, community, and student collaboration to achieve the project goals.

- Assessment of community resources for the provision of immunizations for children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly.
- Assessment of community needs related to maintaining currency of immunization for all community members.
- Identification of existing assets which facilitate access to immunization.
- Identification of existing barriers which prohibit or limit access to immunization.

- Identification of potential vaccine access network partners to create a sustainable infrastructure to expand access to all community members.
- Assessment of feasibility for the creation of a community resource network for increasing immunization access and reducing provider burden.
- Proposal of strategies for the creation of a VAN in the Bradford, PA community.
- Students will present the project findings to the community partner to solicit feedback and refine the presentation strategy, October, 2016.
- Students will present the project findings to a civic organization (ie: Rotary, Zonta International; dependent on fall schedule) prior to the Penn-York Undergraduate Research Conference.
- Students will present a poster at the Penn-York Undergraduate Research Conference on November 5th, 2016.
- Students will develop a poster and conference presentation for the ATP meetings in Washington, D.C., December, 2016.
- Students will present their work at the 2017 Appalachian Studies Association Conference, March 9-12, 2017 at Virginia Tech.

Project Impact:

- Students will develop an understanding and demonstrate skills necessary for the conducting of community based research.
- Students will develop the skills required to conduct a community assessment and investigate and identify community resources for individuals seeking recommended healthcare services.
- Students will gain an appreciation for engagement in professional networking with healthcare providers, public health officials, and non-profit organizations to enhance available services and build local capacity and infrastructure.
- Through the data collection process, community collaboration, and presentations of the project findings at the local, regional, and national level, skills will be introduced and refined to build confidence, public speaking and leadership among student participants.
- Partnerships between the University and the McKean County Collaborative Board, which includes key constituents within the Bradford community will be strengthened.
- Awareness of the specific nature of the health issues within Appalachia with regard to immunization status and risk will be highlighted within the Bradford community.
- Through completion of this project, the McKean County Collaborative Board will be provided the data and strategies to address the identified priority issue of access to adult immunizations to benefit the local community. This information may be used to create a formal VAN for the Bradford community and may be included in the annual *McKean County Community Resource Directory* published by the agency.
- We envision this project to provide pilot and feasibility information that may allow for expansion of the concept to other communities within McKean County and to potentially serve as a model for expansion to other at-risk Appalachian communities.

References

¹United States Census Bureau QuickFacts: Persons in poverty, percent. Retrieved 03/07/2016 from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00>

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Number of deaths for leading causes of death, Retrieved 03/07/2016 from: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/deaths.htm>.

³Pennsylvania Department of Health Epidemiological Query and Mapping System [EpiQMS], Deaths: Influenza and pneumonia. Retrieved 03/07/2016 from: https://apps.health.pa.gov/EpiQMS/asp/SelectParams_Tbl.asp

⁴Bradford Regional Medical Center 2015 Community Health Needs Assessment (2015). Retrieved 06/02/16 from: <https://www.brmc.com/files/chna-and-data-supplement.pdf>

⁵Vaccine recommendations of the ACIP. Retrieved 06/09/16 from: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/>

Appendix A

Program: Bradford, PA Community Immunization Access Logic Model
Situation: High rates of poverty; uncertain access to recommended immunizations

