Peer Learning Networks

Peer Learning Networks (PLNs) are groups of 50-100 people interested in learning, sharing information, and supporting each other around a common theme. Participants interact by sending and receiving email postings through a members-only listserv. The conversations may include asking questions, sharing resources and expertise, collaborative problem solving, and discussions of real-life situations. The moderators play active roles in starting discussion topics and encouraging participation.

Sponsored by The California Endowment [1], the DiversityRx Your Voice initiative piloted three PLNs in 2009-10:

- **Collecting and Using Patient Data** concentrated on issues and how-to information about collecting and using patient demographic data to improve care for diverse populations.
- **Cultural Competence Training** focused on the selection, implementation, and integration of cultural competence training for the staff of large and small health care organizations. Discussion topics included how to: evaluate the format, content, and quality of a specific curriculum or trainer; lay the groundwork in an organization for successful implementation; encourage willing and meaningful staff participation in the program; evaluate the impact of training; support and sustain the benefits of training over the long-term.
- **Communicating with Diverse Populations** addressed how health care organizations can address language and literacy barriers posed by diverse patient populations.

How are PLNs different from our general CLAS-talk listserv [2]? In a Peer Learning Network, a select group of participants focus their interaction on a single topic for one year. They agree to be active regular contributors, and they create depth by sharing their professional experiences: both every-day challenges, and small and large successes. Most importantly, they aim to build community by committing to support each other through honest and helpful responses to the questions that get raised.

With the moderator, members decide the best way to learn. Besides regular discussions, members may choose to have:

- Online discussion forums featuring guest experts and recommended readings or resource materials
- Webinar presentations
- Participation of outside experts

[Read about our other peer learning groups, our Communities of Practice >>] [3]
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