

Older Adult Subcommittee
Meeting Notes
7.17.2023

Attendance: [Elizabeth- Older Adult; Janet- Older Adult; Steve- Older Adult; Alice- Older Adult; Brenda- Older Adult; Beverly- Older Adult; Loretta- Older Adult; Lisa- Older Adult; Michael- Older Adult; Naomi- Older Adult; Nancy- Older Adult; Linda- Older Adult; Myrna – Older Adult; Taylor- Student; Missy- Grant Staff; Sophia- Grant Staff]

Missing: [Phil-Older Adult]

Welcome, Introductions, and Housekeeping

The group was welcomed back and spent a moment on the following activities:

- Members provided short introductions because we have added new members since our last meeting. Members can learn more about each other in the Subcommittee Space on the Aging Research Network
- Members were read the meeting guidelines and also added a new guideline: make sure phones are silent
- The group was thanked for providing or updating their project bios and was told to expect a poll about the sharing of project bios on the Aging Research Network and the project webpage

Project Updates

The group was given a few brief and relevant updates and reminders about the project in order to prepare for the open-ended discussion. Members had some discussions about these updates:

Training and Mentoring Activities

The group briefly went over the different target groups and activities in our training and mentoring program. Members had several points about this topic:

- Members were concerned with how partnership is accomplished. We want to ensure that there is a reciprocal flow. There is a tendency for our culture “to take” and that is the norm, but older adults and researchers both need to be gaining something from the process
- Grant staff clarified that researchers will have the opportunity to meet with all those interested in advising them as a group. Members pointed out that researchers may wish to seek advice from older adults representing different groups. While our already small group will likely not split into smaller groups based on representation, Subcommittees may advise researchers on recruiting older adults for additional engagement

Existing Multi-Media Products

The group reviewed the topics of our existing videos and podcasts and highlighted the impact of engagement on underrepresented groups. Members emphasized that a range of underrepresented groups, including the LGBTQ+ community, are underrepresented in research, and that reaching these communities requires additional flexibility and considerations from researchers, such as providing transportation or childcare. The group also suggested that research projects, as well as our educational materials, should call out what, if any, the specific benefits to underrepresented communities may be.

Brainstorming Session: Informing our “Public Relations” (PR) Approach

The group had a long-format discussion about how we can best reach students and researchers with our message and ensure they don't leave older adults behind. Members were asked “What do researchers need to hear from older adults and what would be more powerful coming from older adults directly. The following are the points from that discussion:

- One member needed more context for this question as researchers need to know specific things in specific situations.

Incentives for Engagement

- Engaging older adults can help provide researchers with a sense of relevance. When a research project ends that wasn't engaged, you end the project saying “so what?.” If one utilizes engagement, they can have relevant actionable change result from a project
- Researchers should recognize the importance of having older adults as participants so that their results are more generalizable
- Research is like mining for gold. Gathering information from older adults that impacts your research is so important. If older adults could get in front of researchers it would be great. This group could act as advocates for engaging older adults. We can dispute preconceived notions about older adults. Members felt that our culture doesn't value older adults so researchers and students need to start hearing our voice
- Older adults can provide specific input to researchers that result in concrete improvements to their research design

Working with Older People

- One member's advice to researchers is to be patient. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in the elder community but it is not always easy to access. Sometimes it takes extra time to work with older people, but that does not mean the extra needed time is not worth the information a researcher can gather
- Members discussed the fact that many older adults have preconceived notions of what being in research means, and those notions can be very negative based on the history of a particular populations. It is best to come to the populations with transparency and share how you will protect them
- Members explained that there is a difference between doing research for vs. with people. We need to convince the researchers that they are not special or smarter than

others. As a researcher there is a need to convince the people you are performing research with that they are important, their input is important, and you value their input

- We need to think about the biases that researchers bring to research. Researchers need to look at their own biases

Underrepresented Groups

- The opportunity to provide highly specific feedback to researchers is really important this specificity will also be important to helping underrepresented groups
- One member stated that when we are talking about underrepresented groups, we must not set aside the medically fragile people who are often left out because they can't verbally participate. A whiteboard or a gesture can make all the difference in the world to someone who can't hear or contribute verbally

Medical Professionals and Communication

- One member wondered how much of our work is targeted at medical professionals and hospitals. This member has had experiences with medical professionals who don't know how to work with seniors. The group wondered if our information be shared with other universities and hospitals so that they can learn how to communicate better. This led to a sub-discussion about communication:
 - The project may need to develop a tool on how to communicate with older adults. We have to teach these skills
 - There is a need to address how communication skills are different for older people than younger people. If people are struggling to communicate with older adults, they probably lack good communications skills generally
 - We can talk about how to avoid jargon in communications
 - One member recognized that ageism is an issue, but if people are ageist they probably have other problematic attitudes
 - One individual felt that sometimes younger people tend to multitask and wind up being impersonal and ignoring others
 - There needs to be some instruction for researchers and it should be held by older adults
 - The student member felt that patience may stretch beyond an individual's attitude, and may also be baked into the environment as time is limited
 - The group felt that it is so important to establish relationships in the engagement process

Next Steps

- Taylor will request permission to share the member bios on the Aging Research Network and Project Webpage
- Grant staff will review Subcommittee feedback to inform Subcommittee Research Advisory process
- Subcommittee members will review the Subcommittee Research Advisory Toolkit