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Using photovoice to engage young adults in biomedical research training

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Abstract

Photovoice is a qualitative research methodology that empowers individuals to use photographs to document core issues that are shared back with community stakeholders through visual presentations. Rooted in community-based participatory research, Photovoice aims to educate and promote critical dialogue among stakeholders to elicit community and policy action. Photovoice can be used with a wide age range (youth to older adults) to explore diverse topics, such as physical and mental health, diet, physical activity, climate change, disease management, health inequities, and social issues. The photovoice methodology includes a structured framework for taking pictures and writing narratives to describe what was photographed, enabling responses to be qualitatively coded for themes. This study explored how the photovoice training methodology could be taught to students during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many training opportunities moved virtually. Our work developed an online training site, Learn Photovoice (<https://sites.google.com/view/learnphotovoice>), which permits asynchronous learning in independent or group settings. The site enables groups nationwide to implement photovoice projects based on a set of prompts approved by OHSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Students learned research ethics and data collection approaches by participating in photovoice, with extended training opportunities that can support document management and qualitative coding experience. Our results show preliminary usage by high school biomedical research training programs in Oregon and West Virginia, which found the methodology to be highly engaging for students. Collaborative discussions around common themes were impactful to students. We share lessons learned for engaging youth and training programs in photovoice. Our preliminary results highlight a positive role for photovoice when training young adults in biomedical research.