

HEALTHCARE WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES ON INFECTION CONTROL IN URBAN INDIAN HEALTH SYSTEMS: A PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Background

Infectious diseases disproportionately affect American Indian/Alaska Native people (AI/AN). Healthcare workers (HCWs) are also at an increased risk of contracting and spreading infectious diseases, posing additional challenges to infection prevention and control (IPC). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic illuminated major gaps in knowledge about IPC among all HCWs, suggesting a need for education and training. There is limited data around IPC practices among HCWs serving AI/AN people.

Objective: To better understand and support this unique group of healthcare professionals, this project used a photovoice approach to capture Urban Indian Organization (UIO) healthcare workers' experiences and insights on IPC.

Methods

Five participants across three UIOs were recruited to participate in a photovoice project. Photovoice uses videos or photography to capture the unique experience and environment of participants and is a powerful method because it emphasizes individual and community action. Indigenous methodology practices were integrated throughout the project, with the project being driven by both the participants and investigators. These practices included grounding, relational accountability, recognizing historical trauma, and maintaining space for storytelling and personal reflection.

Participants shared their experiences through focus groups, interviews, and photographs. Discussion questions covered present-day-to-day work, personal IPC behaviors and attitudes, confidence around IPC, feelings of support, gaps in knowledge, and accommodations for cultural considerations.

Results

Four virtual focus groups and eight interviews were conducted. Each participant created a photo journal, and a total of forty-four photos were submitted. Photos were also shared and discussed during the focus groups and interviews. The project illustrated ideas that are important to HCWs for IPC work at UIOs, with the emerging themes outlined in Table 1 and the following photos.

Table 1. Themes

Major Themes	Sub Themes
Elements of Resilient IPC Program	Resources and Accessibility Education and Training Policies, Practices and Procedures Prevention and Risk Management
Learning at the drop of a dime	Adaptability and Flexibility Systems Level Impact Culture of Safety
Trust happens over time, not over night	AI/AN or Cultural Considerations Community and Patient Involvement Personal Stories and Experiences



Figure 1: Infection prevention and control is crucial



Figure 2: Native-centric imagery at blood draw station

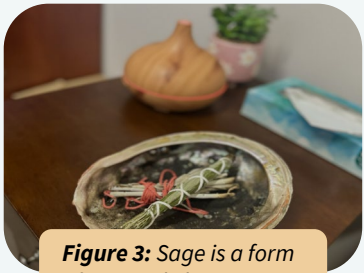


Figure 3: Sage is a form of spiritual cleansing



Figure 4: IPC supplies used during organization events

Photovoice Findings

This photovoice project engaged healthcare workers at UIOs to document their experiences, challenges, and strengths related to IPC. Through photographs and narratives, participants shared frontline perspectives on IPC practices. The findings highlighted the need for education and training, accessibility to resources, and having clear policies, practices and procedures. It also identified IPC strengths within the UIOs, including adaptability and flexibility, a strong culture of safety, and the connection of IPC to personal values, experiences and accountability to the community. Future work should continue to explore these unique healthcare settings to better understand setting specific facilitators and barriers to IPC implementation.

Furthermore, in this project, photovoice proved to be a powerful way for participants to share their experiences from multiple perspectives. This approach may also serve as a valuable tool for UIOs to use in community engagement programming.