

ESTICOM Trainings for Community Health Worker (CHW) in Europe: first results of the European wide training programme for CHW that work in the gay community

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Introduction

Community Health Workers (CHW) play a crucial role for sexual health, community health promotion and HIV/STI prevention among gay men and other men having sex with men (MSM). Despite the importance of CHW for the sexual and community health of MSM, their precise work, role, knowledge and skills are almost unknown on the European level.

Objective

The aim of the ESTICOM Training Programme is to develop a toolbox-training package suitable for CHW, aiming to improve access, quality of prevention, diagnosis of HIV, STI and Viral Hepatitis and health care for MSM. The draft toolbox curriculum (see poster P02/05) was piloted from January until October 2018 in Training of Trainer Workshops (TOT) and National Pilot Trainings (NPT) involving participants from 29 European countries. The objective was to evaluate the draft training material in different European countries, cultural backgrounds and legal and structural environments.

Methods

More than 60 CHW were trained with the ESTICOM draft toolbox curriculum training material. They prepared and ran 19 NPT's including 24 European countries.

All ToT's and 18 NPT's were evaluated by external evaluators (Results in Health). Based on the results of the evaluation report the training material will berevised, amended with the E-Learning components and finalised for publication in August 2019.

Location of the ESTICOM NPT's



Results

The evaluation provided important information that helps create training material for CHW that will increase their attitudes, skills and knowledge to develop and implement better services for MSM in Europe. The feedback from the participants, both in the ToT's and in the NPT's, was positive indicating that they consider both useful for their work as CHW. The ToT trainings were rated very well, with an average score (1-10) of 8,4 (8,2 Athens; 8,3 Berlin; 8,4 Vilnius; 8,7 Warsaw – ranging from 6-10). The average score that was given to the NPT's by the participants ranged from 6 to 9,7, with an average of 8,7.

Conclusion

The ESTICOM Pilot Training Programme was organized and implemented successfully. The Pilot Training Programme served its aim to pilot and test the draft training material. The evaluation of the trainings showed that they can support improving the services of CHW in the different settings throughout Europe. Experiences and data gathered from the evaluation show and support the need of having an appropriate European-wide training material. The interactive, participatory and reflective character of the trainings was highly appreciated by the participants. The participants expressed a high need and interest in future European trainings programmes in the way the ESTICOM trainings were run. The ESTICOM training material and programme is a useful addition to the extensive existing national training programmes.

Recommendations from the evaluation of the NPT's

1. Future training for CHWs, similar to the ESTICOM NPT's, should be continued as part of a European-wide training approach for CHWs, serving as a forum for European CHWs to meet, network, learn, share experiences/ideas with their peers and reflect on their work as CHWs;
2. The materials of European training for CHW should focus on the development of CHWs' soft skills and be accompanied and complimented by materials for the knowledge-based topics. The knowledge-based materials may be delivered as selfstudy materials;
3. The materials of European training for CHW should address different working definitions and terminologies. In addition, it should acknowledge the presence of language barriers in Europe, offering strategies to work with such barriers;
4. The European training materials for CHWs should be designed in such a way that they offer ample space for the materials to be contextualized and tailor-made, including inclusion of local, regional or global evidence-based data.
5. European training for CHWs needs to acknowledge the importance of participant interaction and networking, facilitating sufficient time for participants to connect, share and learn from each other (be it through specific activities or by allowing time for break/joint dinners, etc.). Therefore, it should preserve the character of the ESTICOM NPT's, namely interactive, participatory and reflective;
6. European training for CHW should be facilitated by facilitators who have the skills and capacity to plan, design and deliver training that is interactive, participative and reflective (which a particular focus on skills in moderating experience/idea exchange). To ensure the quality of such a training, our suggestion would be to develop a required set of relevance facilitator skills and competences;
7. For quality assurance, European trainings for CHW should include participative evaluation activities to enable continuous improvement of its materials, process and impact.

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