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POSTER ABSTRACT

Citizen Science in Blue Care: a partnership between research, practice, policy and the community

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Introduction: Health is a fundamental right for all human beings. One way to increase population health is the delivery of adequate health and social care. However, delivering tailored care can be a challenge, since health is interconnected with many factors outside the realm of the health sector itself. Hence, a Citizen Science project started as part of the Blue Care integrated community approach (ICA) located in four neighbourhoods of the city Maastricht, The Netherlands.

Aim and theory of change: The aim of the project is twofold: to develop knowledge with citizens that serves as input for policy development, and to empower the community by involving them as Citizens Scientists.

Short description of practice change implemented: In this project, tacit knowledge is yielded by the citizens themselves about the health enhancing and health damaging neighbourhood features, which are often a challenge to identify by policymakers. With adding tacit knowledge, policy can be tailored to the community. In addition, the Citizen Scientists are trained in the concept of health as the ability to adapt and self-manage, which should increase citizens' health literacy, sense of coherence, community cohesion and quality of life.

Targeted population and stakeholders: The targeted population are the citizens living in four 'Blue Care' neighbourhoods. The neighbourhoods are deprived and low in literacy compared to the rest of Maastricht and the Netherlands.

Timeline: June-July 2018: Preparations project.

August – September 2018: Recruitment participants.

September 2018: Survey recruited participants (e.g. Resilience, Health).

September – October 2018: Training Citizen Scientists (3 trainings of 2,5 hours each).

October – November 2018: 6 weeks of data collection (Stimulation use of different data collection methods (e.g., photos, videos, observations etc.)).

December 2018 – January 2019: 2 focus groups, sharing the collected data (audio recorded and transcribed verbatim).

January – February 2019: Health festival/festive closure with festive graduation for the Citizen Scientists and follow-up survey.

Highlights (innovation, impact and outcomes)

The project is innovative since it integrates the fields of science, practice and policy with citizens as scientists.

Comments on sustainability: Local policy should adopt Citizen Science to improve practicability and to close the gap between policy and practice.

Comments on transferability: The do's and don'ts of the process and the outcomes will be presented which may be helpful for other comparable initiatives.

Conclusions (comprising key findings): Citizen Science may be one of the answers to improve actual feasibility and sustainability of population health policy.

Discussions: Citizen Science is a promising approach to promote policy that goes beyond paper especially in deprived communities. To pursue this, long-term engagement of citizens is needed to add tacit knowledge to local health and social care policy.

Lessons learned: Citizen Science is no threat to scientific quality nor to research methodology.

Citizen Science adds tacit knowledge.

Citizen Science may enhance the feeling of ownership and therefore policy implementation.

Keywords: citizen science; community; health and social care; empowerment; bottom – up approach