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Practicum Site:

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Evaluation to Improve Interdisciplinary Cancer Research in Middle Tennessee

Background: Minority populations in the United States suffer from disproportionate burdens of cancer deaths, despite best efforts by both cancer centers and minority-serving institutions. The Meharry-Vanderbilt-Tennessee State Cancer Partnership (MVTCP) aims to combat these disparities by growing a collaborative network of cores that emphasizes the capacity of minority-serving institutions (MSIs), with the ultimate goal to improve patient outcomes and reduce cancer incidence among minorities. The overall objectives of this practicum were to further understand and participate in interdisciplinary research within the MVTCP by developing tools for regular short-term program evaluation.

Methods: The experience was largely focused within the Evaluation Core of the partnership, with some participation in Community Outreach and Administrative performing primary tasks. These activities included the development of specific short-term evaluation tools and reports, participation in interdisciplinary meetings, contribution of ideas towards future evaluations, and examination of past literature and reports to inform future planning and decision-making.

Results: The primary objective was met through development of a sample evaluation report and report template, created to more adequately support the needs of the Partnership's Research Education and Training Core. Additionally, a qualitative research codebook of anticipated themes for in-person interviews on interdisciplinary collaboration to meet supplemental needs. Implementation of practicum products is still incoming, and outcomes within the MVTCP are still unknown.

Conclusions: The results indicate that there is still much to learn about collaboration within the partnership; the groundbreaking research that has propelled the MVTCP to financial and academic success must be supported by a culture of constant, standardized evaluation.