Appalachian Research Day: Come Sit on the Porch

Frances J. Feltner  
*University of Kentucky*, frances.feltner@uky.edu

Melissa Slone  
*University of Kentucky*, melissa.slone@uky.edu

Beth Bowling  
*University of Kentucky*, beth.bowling@uky.edu

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Introduction

Rural Appalachian communities in eastern Kentucky suffer from some of the Nation’s most concerning health disparities. Community-based research can be an effective way to address health disparities by identifying problems and sharing workable solutions. However, challenges exist in recruiting and retaining research participants in rural populations that can often be difficult to reach. Partnerships between researchers and communities are essential to the success of the research process, particularly translation of findings back into the community.

Model

Appalachian Research Day is a one-day annual event that offers a unique forum for university-based researchers to disseminate health disparities research findings directly into the community where the research was conducted. Research participants, healthcare providers and community stakeholders attend the event to learn the outcomes of community-based studies focused on diabetes, stroke, heart disease, cancer and substance abuse.

Conclusion

Appalachian Research Day is a unique forum that demonstrates successful community based research:
• Begins at the local level.
• Is built upon the foundation of relationships among individuals, neighbors and groups who have common questions and concerns.
• Benefits from partnerships between communities and researchers.
• Requires strategies for successful recruitment and retention of special populations that can be difficult to reach.
• Offers opportunities for local research dissemination and implementation.

Appalachian Research Day embraces the Appalachian tradition of sitting on the porch while working and listening to stories told by elders of the family. Dr. Feltner credits her time with her grandfather for the concept of Appalachian Research Day.

Presenters: Frances Feltner, DNP, FAAN, Melissa Slone, MSW, and Beth Bowling, RN