

Evaluating a Cancer Risk Reduction Program Over Time: An Outcome Indicator Approach

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Objective: Develop evaluation metrics that can be used to capture diverse stakeholder audiences' understanding of cancer and environment information and actions taken for individual and community cancer risk reduction.

Background: As a public health outreach program matures, evaluation tools also need to mature, including developing approaches and methods that can evaluate the entire program's efforts over time. We describe and present the use of an outcome indicator approach to evaluate four aspects of program impact, and the development of an interactive database for the storage, retrieval, and computation of evaluation results.

Methods: Questions to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programming across events were developed on four themes: 1) knowledge about environment and cancer, 2) individual actions for risk reduction, 3) ability to use/share cancer and environment information in the workplace, and 4) increased ability to join with community members to develop collective strategies for risk reduction. Sets of questions were developed for each theme, and questions were used in designing evaluation surveys for each educational event. A customized database was designed for recording and tabulating outcome indicator results over time. Data were gathered for 18 events held between October 1, 2003 and June 2, 2006.

Results: Participants rated questions on a 1 to 5 scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Average scores for example questions include:

I feel better able to understand research findings about

how environmental chemicals may be relate to cancer risk (4.4)

how diet and lifestyle may be related to cancer risk (4.0)

I plan to reduce risk by

getting regular exercise/maintaining a healthy body weight (4.3)

I plan to share information on cancer risk reduction

with clients or patients (4.1) with co-workers (4.3)

I feel better able to

join with others in the community to address issues related to cancer and the environment (4.1)

Conclusion: Outcome indicators can be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of risk-reduction educational programming over time.

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