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Observing the Effectiveness of a Mobile Research Van in Recruiting Representative Populations of African Americans in a Health Care Study

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Research has shown that individuals from minority groups, including African Americans, are often underrepresented in health care studies. Barriers to recruiting ethnic and racial minorities into health studies include mistrust of medical research, lack of awareness about available studies, and failure to meet eligibility criteria. In order to gain representative population of minorities into health studies, more effective methods of minority recruitment have to be implemented. Without improving minorities’ participation into research, health disparities can continue, as new medical therapies and behavioral interventions might not apply to populations excluded from research studies. The goal of this study was to examine the efficacy of the Neighborhood Voice van, a mobile recruitment van, at enrolling minority participants (specifically Blacks or African Americans) into a health related study. This study was part of the first aim of a larger study investigating Missouri’s uninsured population’s understanding of health insurance terms.

Fifty-one of the 65 individuals who were eligible to participate in the larger study agreed to participate; 68.63% of participants were African American. By county, African American participation was detailed as follows: 1 of 14 participants (7.14%) in Jefferson County, 12 of 14 participants in St. Louis County (85.71%) and 22 of 23 participants (95.65%) in St. Louis City. Overall, this study provided support for the hypothesis that the mobile van can be an effective recruitment strategy for reaching minority participants, especially African Americans, since the population of African Americans in Jefferson County, St. Louis County and St. Louis City is 1.0%, 23.4%, 48.3%, respectively. However, given the relatively small sample size (n = 51), these findings should be replicated before concluding that the Neighborhood Voice is truly effective in recruiting a representative percentage of African Americans proportionate to the overall population into health related studies.