Cultivating Partnerships for Practice- and Policy-Relevant Health Research: Lessons Learned from the UCSF Population Health Data Initiative

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Background
The UCSF Population Health Data Initiative (PHDI) is an applied research program with the goals of:
1) Informing clinical and community interventions to promote health equity
2) Building infrastructure for collaborations between public health and health system leadership and academic population health researchers

Core Activities
• PHDI researchers partnered with faculty from the UCSF Office of Population Health (OPH) to facilitate a project using geocoded health record data to identify geospatial concentrations of UCSF patients due for COVID-19 vaccination
• Detected a multi-unit supportive housing residence with 90 unvaccinated or under-vaccinated UCSF patients, nearly all (94%) of whom were populations prioritized for equity outreach: Black and Hispanic/Latinx individuals, children aged 5-11, individuals with low income
• PHDI collaborated with community partners to organize a vaccine popup, reaching 75+ patients and community members and vaccinating 21 people

Choropleth map of census tract-level counts of UCSF patients due for COVID-19 vaccination, February 2022

Methods
PHDI specializes in stakeholder engagement and linkage of data sources across disciplines and organizations. For example:
• Since 2017, PHDI has regularly geocoded electronic health records made available to researchers with IRB approval and to health care systems for quality improvement
• Geocoded health record data can be linked with public neighborhood data to examine population health and health equity conditions and interventions
• In 2021, the San Francisco Department of Public Health and UCSF collaboratively launched a CDC grant on pandemic preparedness to advance health equity

Key Partnership Components
• PHDI recognizes the importance of building trust and collaboration across community, public health, academic, and clinical partners for transforming data into action

Consistent discussions on:
- Setting priorities in collaboration
- Clear processes for data sharing
- Alignment of goals & objectives

Buy-in and support from all levels:
- Healthcare Delivery
- Leadership/Director-Makers
- Researchers
- Project Managers/Administration

Flexibility in terms of:
- Timelines
- Shifting priorities
- Resource allocation

Implications for D&I Science
• Insights from partnership-building experiences are relevant to communities nationally to shape our responses to public health emergencies like COVID-19 as well as long-standing population health challenges such as chronic disease
• This work highlights the importance of building trust and collaboration across community, public health, academic, and clinical partners for transforming data into action

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