

The Translational Research Institute on Pain in Later Life (TRIPLL) at Cornell University

- NIA funded Edward R. Roybal center established in response to the plight of millions of older adults experiencing persistent pain.
- Mission: To improve the prevention and management of pain in later life; thereby increasing the health and well-being of older adults.
- Supports translational research on aging and pain in greater NYC area.



Get Involved with TRIPLL

- Email Cara Kenien at cak2017@med.cornell.edu to join our email list and become an affiliate; joining gives you access to:
 - TRIPLL's monthly newsletter.
 - Information about upcoming Work-in-Progress Seminars, webinar and funding announcements, and conference opportunities.
 - Networking opportunities.

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Practical Skills in Conducting Effective Focus Groups

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Agenda

- Brief review of qualitative methodology
- Planning for group dynamics
- Developing questions
- Active listening skills
- Validating what you hear

Qualitative Methods

- **Develop formal theory grounded in social reality**
- **Hypothesis generating**
- **Deconstruct current theories**
- **Formative & summative program evaluation**
- **Mixed methods research**

**The language of qualitative
research methods is the
natural language of research
subjects**

**Qualitative research methods
present social reality from the
perspective of people who
experience the phenomena**

Qualitative research methods are generally associated with exploratory research

Planning for Group Dynamics

- **Logistics**

- Choosing a location
- Plan room arrangements
- Consider food
- Audio taping and note taking
- Allow sufficient time for discussion

- **Establish expectations**
 - Be clear about the goal
 - IRB consent
 - Confidentiality
- **Set the tone**
 - Group ground rules
 - Respect
 - Trust

Developing Trust

- What will the participants gain from the focus group study?
- How will study findings be explained to the participants and their community?
- Who will interface with the community?

Developing Questions

Categories of Questions

Question Type	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants get acquainted & feel connected
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begins discussion of the topic
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moves smoothly and seamlessly into key questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtains insight into areas central to the study
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ending	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helps the researcher determine where to place emphasis & brings closure to the discussion

Moderators Guide

- Open-ended neutral questions
- Simple language
- Short sentences
- The active rather than the passive voice
- One question per sentence
- Use probes
- Ask participants to think back
- Use the deflection technique
- Refrain from giving examples

Moderators Guide

Sequencing Questions

- Move from general to specific questions
- Start with factual questions then move to emotional ones
- Start with positive questions before negative ones
- Use probes after open ended questions

CULTURAL VARIATIONS

- Include all appropriate word variations
- Use word variations for each subgroup
- Avoid colloquialisms
- Use alternate phrases or wording
- Avoid mixing two languages

Designing questions

- **Who**
- **How**
- **What**
- **Where**
- **When**
- ***“Tell us more about.....”***
- ***“Describe how.....”***

Osteoarthritis and Pain

Question Type	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>“Tell us your name and where you live”</i><i>“Tell us how long you have been coming to HSS”</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Introductory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>“How long have you been living with Osteoarthritis?”</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>“How would you describe Osteoarthritis?”</i>

Question Type	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Think back to when you started to have pain related to your Osteoarthritis. How would you describe the pain?”</i> • <i>“There are many different ways people experience pain. When are the times you experience very little pain?”</i> • <i>“When are the times you experience the worst pain?”</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Tell us in what ways the pain from Osteoarthritis has changed your life?”</i>

Question Type	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“We will be reviewing all of the information you have provided us so that we can better understand your experience with Osteoarthritis pain. Before we end, what advice would you have for someone who is experiencing pain due to OA?”</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Is there anything about living with Osteoarthritis and pain that you would like to tell us that we have not covered?”</i>

Active Listening Skills

Engage in Active Listening

- Acknowledge what you hear without “*rushing in*” to respond
- Recognize individual as well as group responses
- Review, discuss and process information with research team, community key informants

Verbal Communication

Tone and demeanor

Expressive of emotions

Affect

Relationship to study topic

Non-Verbal Communication

Greetings

Touching

Eye Contact

Gesturing

Affect

Validating what you hear

- Ask for information to be repeated
- Repeat information to ensure you understand what is being stated
- Don't worry about not understanding or knowing all the answers
- Don't interject your own opinions, thoughts or knowledge about the study focus

Summary

- Ensure that qualitative methods are appropriate for your research question
- Planning is an essential step for successful focus group dynamics and valuable data
- Spend significant time developing the questions and piloting your guide
- Engage in active listening skills
- Repeat what you heard to ensure validity of your findings

“When in doubt, observe and ask questions.”

“When certain, observe at length and ask more questions.”

Halcolm’s Evaluation Laws

References

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Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research, Richard A Krueger, Marry Anne Casey, Fourth Edition, Sage Publications, 2009