

Needs Assessment for Oregon Collaborative for Healthy Nail Salons
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OCHNS Description and Program Objectives

The Oregon Collaborative for Healthy Nail Salons (OCHNS) is an informal collaborative that “works to improve the environmental health of nail salon workers and customers through education and outreach” (Oregon Collaborative for Healthy Nail Salons, n.d). OCHNS members consist of various Oregon agencies and organizations. Current projects include hosting Best Practice Seminars to educate nail technicians and salon owners about safety, the distribution and pilot testing of the OCHNS Best Management Practices’ checklist, and conducting a needs based assessment in the Portland Metro area (Oregon Collaborative for Healthy Nail Salons). The present involvement of Multnomah County Health Department with OCHNS is to conduct the needs assessment through one on one interviews with stakeholders in the community.

Research Objective

There are assumptions about attitudes, beliefs and knowledge of those working in the beauty industry that have yet to be researched and documented. Therefore, the research objective of the proposed interviews is to gather feedback from various stakeholders in the community. Initial interviews consisted of meeting with collaborative members to determine what information was most pertinent to OCHNS and the present status of their programs. Incorporating member feedback, the intention of the stakeholder interviews is to determine the following: what, if any, health concerns exist; the impact removing toxic chemicals has had on business, production and distribution; and to determine how knowledgeable those involved in the nail industry are about their daily exposures to nail salon products.

Guiding Theory

The key informant interviews will be rooted in Freire’s empowerment theory and popular education while incorporating methodology of Community Based Participatory Research. Empowerment theory begins with “the recognition of powerlessness as a broad risk factor for disease, and, consequently, empowerment as a health enhancing strategy” (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994, p. 142). The Freirian approach suggests that participation in group action directed toward the improvement of their community enhances the health and self efficacy of the

individual (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988). The goal is to create a more just and equitable society with the focus being on social justice (personal communication with Noelle Wiggins, April 29, 2009). It involves a process of the group's effort to identify the problem, assess the roots of the problem, and develop strategies to overcome the obstacles to solving the problem. There are three stages in empowerment education; listening, dialogue, and action. The key informant interviews will incorporate the first two stages while informing the OCHNS of recommendations for empowering the community towards action.

Limitations

Limitations to the described needs assessment include the use of interviews only and not incorporating other methods of empowerment and analysis. Efforts have been made by MCHD to conduct focus groups but monetary and participation factors prohibited the groups moving beyond the planning stage. One to one interviews with a "convenience" sample of stakeholders limit the time requirements and financial resources required to hosting groups. However, the data collected at focus groups offers insight unable to be obtained in one to one interviews. Considering the above limitations, the needs assessment is a step toward engaging the community but not to be interpreted as a complete needs assessment and relationship building in the community.

Methods

Target Stakeholders

A categorical list of stakeholders was developed including a variety of stakeholders in the nail industry. Interviewees were selected in reference to the list to ensure equal representation among those affected by the nail salon environment. Examples of these categories include product manufacturers of both conventional and alternative products, nail salon owners, nail technicians, beauty industry representatives, and beauty supply stores. Taking steps to include a variety of stakeholders will ensure those involved are defining the problem as they see it and encourage a diverse range of responses.

Data Collection

Collecting qualitative data through key informant interviews is a key component to inform future projects and grant proposals for OCHNS. In developing the scripts for the interviews, attention was given to developing questions that encourage the dialogue approach

outlined by the empowerment theory and popular education. Questions were formatted to allow the individuals to describe the environment with which they work and define the problem and barriers to change as they see it while trying to prevent leading by the interviewer. Therefore, the scripts were interpreted as guidelines, but not presented verbatim for each stakeholder interviewed.

Process

A Masters of Public Health intern worked under the supervision of a MCHD Health Educator in the development of the key informant interview scripts. The intern then contacted various stakeholders to schedule and conduct interviews. Additionally, a MCHD representative who has contacts in the Vietnamese community conducted interviews. Interviews were conducted by phone, through email, or in person, depending on the availability, location and desire of the interviewee.

Results

Aggregated Qualitative Data from Interviews

Results of the interviews have been aggregated to protect the identity of those participating in the interviews. The categorical stakeholder list has also been de-identified unless the stakeholder indicated wanting to work with OCHNS further or the contact information is associated with an organization. For number of successful contacts with stakeholders, see the table below.

<i>Stakeholders by Category</i>	<i>Number of Unique Contacts</i>	<i>Number of Successful Interviews</i>
Manufacturers of Nail Salon Products	6	4
Nail Salon Supply Stores	3	3
Nail Schools	4	4
Nail Salon Owners	Unknown	3
Nail Salon Technicians	Unknown	5
Nail Salon Patrons	Unknown	28

*Some data is unknown because contacts were made by more than one interviewer and tracking was of unique contacts was not requested at the beginning of data collection.

Washington State

A contact with the Washington Nail Salons Initiative has indicated several successes with their work in the nail industry. Their programs include site visits and educational workshops. From my conversation with them, their successes seem related to the time spent building relationships, the hiring of Community Health Workers of Vietnamese descent, and the use of incentives. The incentives are in the form of free gifts such as spill kits, faucets, or various other items collected through in kind donations. Additionally, they are working at expanding the EnviroStar program to include nail salons, which recognizes businesses for being environment stewards through a rating system. Their next step includes the development of a website. This website will have information about their research, programs, documents, and other tools for sharing with other collaborative nationwide.

California State

I was not able to contact a representative from the CA Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative during the duration of my internship. However, their website and links illustrated the focal efforts of the collaborative. CA Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative consists of nonprofits, nail salon owners and workers, labor and Asian American community health. Their efforts fall into three main areas: policy advocacy, outreach and education, and research. Their webpage also includes health information and relevant resources accessible to the public. As I was unable to make contact, I was not able to discover their strategies and tactics for community engagement.

Manufacturers of Nail Salon Products

Contact was made with representatives from companies who manufacture nail care products. All companies interviewed reported that their formulations do not use toluene, formaldehyde or DBP in the manufacturing of their products. Some also omit the use of xylene, nitrocellulose resin, FD & C colors, and fragrance. The responses from the company representatives illustrated huge variance in the attitudes of the companies. Some company representatives were eager and willing to talk with me while others had to be contacted five or more times before it was determined they were not interested in communicating with me. Some were very well integrated into the Vietnamese community, while others had no relationships with Vietnamese owned salons.

A common theme was noted among the manufacturers that produce products with the most chemicals removed. All but one indicated that they won't allow their products to be sold in salons that don't entirely embody the green movement. One such representative responded that they didn't want to see their products in "those chop shop nail salons." This seems like an important gap to address, bringing the manufacturers on board with the environmental justice concerns and promotion of their products being used across all salon environments.

Only one company interviewed indicated the merging of two product lines. It was indicated that this was a very beneficial move considering how difficult it is to monitor and store multiple lines. It was said multiple product lines are bound to get mixed up, which causes a problem with distribution and client satisfaction. However, the fiscal benefits were not disclosed due to confidentiality of the business.

Supply Stores

Three local supply stores were contacted to inquire about demographics of their patrons, access of alternative products, and interest in carrying alternative product lines. Two supply stores indicated that they only sell to licensed professionals and proof of licensure was required to purchase products. The other store tailors to licensed professionals but has the capacity for retail as well. The store that also sells to the public carries a wide range of products, including products that are marketed as green/alternative. The store that only sells to licensed professionals do sell OPI products, but do not appear to identify them as green/alternative by the supply store representatives. However, they noted that they would supply green/alternative products if they were selling to the general public, but don't since they only sell to licensed professionals.

Beauty Schools

Each contact made with the various beauty schools reported being in the field for multiple years. Each school listed a variety of safety practices being taught as part of their curriculum, including skin disease, infections, disorders, disinfection, machine safety, and several others. When asked specifically about safety with the chemicals used, they talked primarily about skin sensitivities and protective wear. Only one school mentioned the MSDS sheets as part of their curriculum, but noted that they don't use it as a first reference, more as a tool for their students to be aware of. All reported feeling that their curriculum was sufficient for

education about safety and feel that it is emphasized in daily practice. All school representatives who were asked about the precautionary principle had not heard of it. All school representatives illustrated interest in having OCHNS come to the school to discuss their work upon approval of the presentation material.

One school commented on frustration with regulation and licensing across state lines. She commented that Oregon has tight regulations for the schools, but often, professionals come from other states where the educational requirements are less regulated and are able to be licensed in Oregon without further training. She feels this reflects poorly on Oregon schools, as the clients receiving care often do not know the background education of their nail technicians.

Another school noted that they chose to stop teaching artificial nails on the floor due to complaints of sensitivities by the students. They teach the skill in classroom on mannequins, but do not perform the practice on clients. They also chose to switch to an odorless OPI product since the students complained about headaches. However, she noted that the product is not less toxic, just odorless.

Nail Salon Owners

There was some trouble getting nail technicians and salon owners to take the time to talk to us. Often, time taken away from work and money were the reasons given. Combining interviews conducted by myself and co-interviewer from MCHD, we successfully interviewed two nail salon owners and one salon manager, two females and one male. Length of time in the field ranged from seven to twelve years. Two respondents indicated a desire to stay in the field until they retire while one is planning on leaving due to her health. All report conducting a wide variety of practices; including acrylic and gel nail extensions, natural nail manicures and pedicures, and some reported massage, facials, and hair services as well. Salon sizes and amenities varied. The question inquiring if the ownership of the salon was single owner or individually owned stations was not answered by all respondents, making the data incomparable. Only one owner responded about the MSDS sheets, claiming that they are not useful and they are confusing, especially if the technicians do not speak English. Chemical mixing occurs both at a sink in the back of the salon or at the work table itself. The odor appears to only be a problem to people who come for services that are not nail related (hair, waxing or husbands coming in with

their wives were all identified). One owner offered a personal narrative about the industry, claiming that education is a big barrier to the community. This owner feels that nail industry workers don't care about health risk, because they can make money as a nail technician with little education or language skills.

Nail Technicians

Similar to the response rate of the salon owners, only a limited number of interviews were able to be conducted. Several attempts were refused due to not enough time and lack of interest during work hours. We did successfully interview four females and one male who just completed training to become a nail technician. Length of time in the field varied from just starting to over ten years in the field. Only one respondent reported an interest in leaving, but she predominantly conducted hair services and complained of time standing on her feet as a reason for leaving, not her nail practices or health. Most reported conducting a variety of services at the salon, but only three reported performing them on a regular basis. The smell was reported a problem when more than one person was working at a time (note, most salons have more than one station). Chemicals are mixed in the back room, at the work station, or not used by the technician interviewed. As for the ability to express concerns or complaints, three declined to respond, one mentioned talking to spouse, one claimed to not have any complaints yet. An observation in the field where I received a pedicure, the technician wore gloves during the foot bath phase. When asked why, she said the products hurt her skin, showing that she is able to take precautionary steps to protect her health at that particular salon. When asked about green or alternative nail care products, none of the technicians I spoke with knew of OPI's change in formulation but each said they were interested in learning more about different products. All who reported about their daily practice reported a slowing with the economic recession.

Nail Salon Patrons

Nail salon patrons were contacted to determine what services were most often used, barriers to the use of alternative nail products, and the perception of safety of the nail salons. Toenail services (92.63% of those reported a minimum of once a year) were sought more often than fingernail services (natural manicures, acrylic nails, gel nails). Only one patron reported the use of acrylic nails, and only one reported the use of gel nails (3.5% for both), while 69.2%

reported paying for natural manicure services at least once a year. 57.1% felt that the salon environment is safe for them as customers and 46.4% felt they were safe for the nail technicians. The most common reported motivators for the use of alternative nail care products was price and if made more available at stores (48.1% and 33.3% respectively).

Recommendations for Future Efforts

The following sections include feedback from key informants, members of the collaborative, and observations made throughout the assessment process. OCHNS is not expected to do all or any of the suggestions and are intended to offer insight and initiate brainstorming and dialogue into their next step.

Gathering of Resources

Gathering funding through grants would allow OCHNS to hire representative staff members, develop culturally appropriate materials, and print resources for the community. From interviews with OCHNS members, it was confirmed that attempts had been made to work with nonprofit organizations to collaborate and write grants to fund healthy nail salon programs. The general response was an interest once OCHNS obtains funding or general support in the work but the nonprofits did not feel that it is an appropriate fit with their mission to take on grant writing responsibilities. The scope of this research did not include a thorough analysis of what transpired in these early relationship building attempts. However, OCHNS would benefit from revisiting and working on relationship building with other nonprofits. An important step to emphasize is illustrating to the nonprofits the reciprocal nature of the relationship. The nonprofit organizations should be able to recognize how OCHNS can aid them as well. This can be done by being present for their events, supporting their causes, etc. Once relationships have been established, and the organizations have a sense of reciprocity, then working together to form programs and grant writing to benefit both OCHNS and the nonprofits may be more successful.

While there is confidence that the grant through CROET will be approved, it is still worth mentioning ideas for future grant writing. OCHNS would benefit from working to form a 501(c)3. Grants from a 501(c)3 would allow OCHNS financial opportunities separate of relationships with nonprofits. When writing grants, it is important to include time for trust building and the development of culturally appropriate documents into the grant proposals. An interviewee who works in a nonprofit organization recommended at least six months be

dedicated to this purpose. Also, including measurable outcomes such as recruitment of community representatives, conduct focus groups, etc, will show potential funders you are committed to cultural competence in your work.

Entering the Community

After working on this project for two months, the lack of successful interviews with nail salon owners and nail technicians illustrates the potential challenges in developing relationships with this community. A first part of OCHNS's action plan should include strategies and tactics in the steps to engage the community. The following are examples of approaches that are worth discussing.

Collaborating with existing services. Collaborating with existing services may be a way to enter the community, or learn techniques that have been effective for entering the community. For example, the Vietnamese Student Association at Portland State University may show interest in collaborating, either via community based learning experiences or internships. However, there are ethical concerns over utilizing an existing service who has taken the time to build relationships with the community. As one interviewee mentioned, it is treating them like a short cut. Therefore, relationship building and reciprocity is again an important step.

Churches and temples. From Vietnamese contacts, one respondent said to develop relationships with churches, but others disagreed. Due to the short time span of the internship position and the length of time needed to build relationships with large organizations such as the churches and temples in the area, contact was not initiated.

Hiring a community health worker. Hiring a Community Health Worker (CHW) is an important step in developing relationships with the community. CHWs are trusted community members who establish imperative connections between the community and those who work with them. A CHW knows the communication styles and communication rules of the community that cannot be known by an outsider. Additionally, there is a level of trust that is necessary when working with a community that cannot be reached unless by a person the community members identify with. The hiring of a CHW can inform OCHNS of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the messages they are presenting to the community. A CHW can also act as an expert on the community's culture, interpret and translate materials, and represent and advocate for both community members and OCHNS. Considering the spread and

competition among nail salons, it may help to start with a few pilot salons to determine the effectiveness of utilizing a CHW.

Offer incentives for their time. Due to the current economic climate, taking time away from the nail technicians and salon owners work hours is a potential barrier to successful interviews, even during slow hours. Paying for their time or offering at minimum a small token of appreciation may increase the response rate. Recognizing the current budget of OCHNS, seeking out in kind donations from community partners may be an option.

Dissemination of Information

Developing and disseminating information about OCHNS and the health and environmental justice issues in nail salons is another important step toward increasing relationships and progressing as a collaborative. One such method could be the development of a listserv or electronic newsletter sent out periodically, offering updates about the programs and research surrounding healthy nail salons. Additionally, developing a curriculum to be presented at the beauty schools is a step necessarily to develop relationships with them and reach students before they begin their practices.

Ethical Implications

When applying aspects of Community Based Participatory Research methods, special ethical concerns arise. Care must be given not to “otherize” the community members (Walsh, Hewson, Shier, & Morales, 2008). The community members are not research subjects, rather a partner in developing solutions. Additionally, care must be given to not make the community appear in need, which can further stigmatize the group (Walsh, Hewson, Shier, & Morales, 2008). There is also potential concern over the ethics of interviewing and studying members of the community without having any assistance to offer them, which arose as I started seeking out nail technicians and salon owners to interview. There is a possibility that by making community members more aware of their health risks, they may feel increased stress or defeated as opposed to empowered.

Conclusion

Interviewing with the various members of the nail industry offers a chance to see the work environment at various levels. However, accessing all of the above information can complicate at what level your programs intend to get involved. Starting at the manufacturing

level, efforts could be put into encouraging the application of the precautionary principle into their work. Additionally, programs could focus on bridging the gap between the green/alternative nail products manufacturers and the Vietnamese nail salons. Schools seem interested in working with OCHNS, but their primary focus in their curriculum is on sanitation and disinfectant, less on health effects of long term exposure to chemicals. When engaging the community of Vietnamese nail technicians and nail salon owners, relationship and trust building is an essential step. Time commitment, active involvement, and recruitment of CHW are important steps in successfully engaging a community.

References

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