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Review Article

Using focus groups to inform pharmacy research

Sally A. Huston Ph.D. ^a ... Eric H. Hobson Ph.D. ^b

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Abstract

Background

Focus groups are a powerful research tool for collecting qualitative information across many contexts. The focus group offers pharmacy researchers benefits that support many of the important lines of investigation at the forefront of contemporary pharmacy-based research, particularly within the areas of patient compliance/concordance, customer behavior, patient-provider collaboration, health literacy research, and disease management. This article introduces the focus group as a research method that offers powerful investigative potential to researchers who are attempting to understand human-based phenomena.

Objectives

To provide sufficient background, examples, and how to information to enable a pharmacy researcher to include focus group methodology in their initial design

pharmacy researcher to include focus group methodologies in their initial design decisions, and provide guidance to additional resources necessary for successful implementation of this powerful qualitative approach.

Methods

The article is organized into sections describing what a focus group is and what it can be used for; the unique benefits and drawbacks of using focus group methodology; organization and planning considerations including participant and recruitment considerations; and sampling strategies, session and question development, practical details of session management, and follow-up activities, including data analysis.

Results/Conclusion

Although often considered quick and easy focus groups require thoughtful consideration of need and purpose, considerable planning, and effort to succeed. Because of the unique insight that can be gained, their flexibility, and their ability to mesh with other methods, focus group is gaining currency as an important research tool within health care.



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Keywords

Focus groups; Methods; Qualitative research; Pharmacy

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