

Community consultation in a regional hospital in the Republic of Benin to co-develop the PUMA randomised trial

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Background

Community Engagement and Involvement (CEI) contributes to the success of research by improving patient recruitment and participation and by establishing a relationship of trust and partnership between the researcher and the target populations [1]. A range of methods can be used to achieve this, and they must be in line with a minimum set of standards [2]. Based on these considerations, the Benin Hub of the National Institute for Health Research Global Health Research Unit on Global Surgery organised a CEI consultation to assess, with patients and nursing staff, the level of understanding of the key concepts, their acceptability, their appreciation of the timeline and expected outcomes of the PUMA randomised controlled trial (Perioperative interventions Used to improve recovery around the time of Major Abdominal surgery), which aims to improve outcomes for anaemic patients undergoing major abdominal surgery.

Methods

To reach this goal, we used several methods including a focus group (picture 1) and semi-structured interviews (picture 2) in a referral and regional hospital in the Republic of Benin, the Departmental University Hospital of Ouémé-Plateau (CHUD-OP). All participants gave their verbal consent to take part and to the use of their images.

Results

A total of 23 people took part in the focus group, including 14 patients and 9 patients' relatives. In the other hand, they were 7 health workers who took part in the semi-structured interview. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of participants. A particular attention was paid on gender. The survey assessed patients' knowledge of anaemia, blood transfusion and post-operative recovery. It also identified their perceptions and beliefs, assessed their





acceptability of participating in the PUMA study and examined the acceptability of the treatment schedule. The health workers suggested to us several ways of communicating with the patients.

Most of the focus group participants had an appropriate understanding of anaemia, describing it as a blood deficit in the body. They also had personal or family experience of this disease and were familiar with its common symptoms. When asked about their experience with treatments for anaemia, all participants responded positively. They mentioned iron and folic acid tablets as common treatments for anaemia, in addition to herbal teas, which they often use as a first-line treatment.

Blood transfusion is widely understood by all the participants in the focus group as a means of providing blood to a patient in need. None of the participants objected to receiving blood in case of need, or to their children receiving it. However, some mentioned that people, because of their religious beliefs, categorically refuse to be transfused and choose to lose their lives rather than accept a transfusion. They all agreed that blood donation was important and supported it.

Participants defined recovery as the process of regaining health and autonomy after an operation, stressing the importance of feeling better and resuming normal activities.

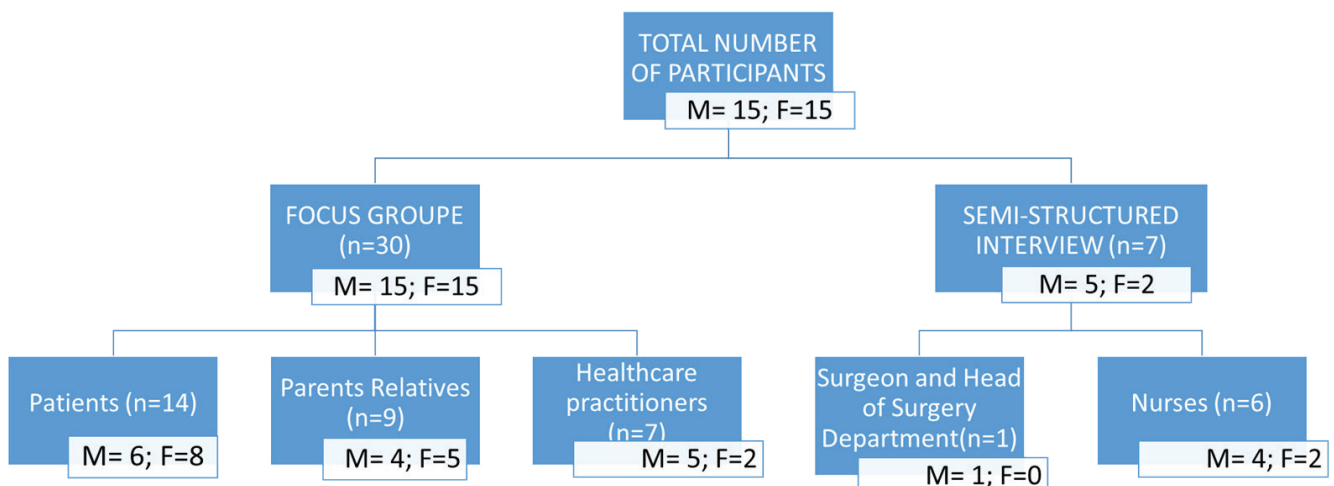
Both health workers and patients and their parents are in favour of a study aimed at enhancing recovery after surgery and a study testing different methods of reducing the risk of anaemia during surgery. Health workers also approved these studies as a way of improving patient care.

Conclusion

This community consultation was carried out successfully, with the active participation of health workers, patients and their relatives at CHUD-OP. It provided valuable information for the PUMA study. The participants expressed their support for such initiatives and hoped that similar sessions would be held on a regular basis.

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Flowchart: breakdown of participants in the engagement session



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