

Check It!

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The first two weeks of working as a research assistant for Check It have been very fulfilling! Check It is a screening and treatment program for chlamydia. The program focuses on black men aged 15-24 in New Orleans. The program has already done a lot of great things for the community by getting many men tested and treated for free. The exciting thing about this program is that, not only does it help people be healthy, but it also has the opportunity to teach us a lot about barriers to communicating about sexual health concerns so that we can combat them.

This idea is the main focus of the work that I am beginning to do under the guidance of Professor Alyssa Lederer. Check It has been interviewing participants who have been tested through the program to gain insights on how we can best address the issue of chlamydia in the community. One of the main issues that needs to be addressed is that people who have tested positive for chlamydia need to communicate with their sex partners that they have an STI. This is important so that their partners can be tested and treated as well. Of course, this makes sense, but communicating with a sex partner is a lot more complicated than that. Researchers can guess why people aren't telling their partners, but it is far better to hear from the real people themselves.

This is the fundamental idea behind qualitative public health research. If we want a group of people to change a health behavior, we have to listen to the needs of the community so that any and all programming measures are tailored to the true needs of the people in question. It is essential that researchers do not assume that they can know the true needs of a community without asking the community first.

I have been very lucky to be welcomed into the fantastic research team that is the Check It team. So far, I have familiarized myself with the study with the help of Professor Alyssa Lederer. I have had very engaging meetings with both Professor Lederer and the entire Check It team. I am so grateful for the warm welcome to the team and the mentorship relationships that I am forming.

My first task as a research assistant on this project is going to be transcribing interviews. Transcribing is one of the key tasks for a qualitative research project. Once the interviews have been transcribed, the team will transition to qualitatively analyzing the interviews.

I am so excited to see what we can learn from this study!