



Foundations of Public Health

Part I: Foundations of the Profession and Science of Public Health

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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Introduction

While quantitative research methods are designed to precisely measure the association between biologic, social, environmental, and behavioral factors and health conditions, qualitative research methods focus on understanding why and how individual life experience and the context of community life influence health and wellness. Such contextual information is difficult to capture through traditional quantitative surveys, but is vitally important for understanding and addressing the behavioral, structural, and social determinants of health problems. Methods that rely on rapport and trust between researcher and participant, that include observations of everyday life, and that use open-ended questions to enable participants to talk about their perceptions and experiences in their own words are well suited to this challenge.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, the student will be able to:

- Articulate the purpose and significance of qualitative research methods.
- Determine when it is appropriate to use qualitative methods to address research question(s).
- Illustrate ethical considerations in the conduct of qualitative methods.
- Define the major qualitative research techniques, their strengths, limitations, and contexts in which they are best used.
- Define and illustrate the importance of “Community-based Participatory Research” (CBPR) as a research design often involving qualitative methods.

