

Role on Translational Research and Clinical Intervention

Mario Romano*

PhD, Assistant Managing Director, Faculty for Medicine, University of Milan, Italy.

*Corresponding author: Mario Romano, Faculty for Medicine, University of Milan, Italy.

Email: ciriaco.paola@hsr.it

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Abstract

Translational research has tremendous potential as a tool to reduce health disparities in the United States, but a lack of common understanding about the scope of this dynamic, multidisciplinary approach to research has limited its use. The term “translational research” is often associated with the phrase “bench to bedside,” but the expedited movement of biomedical advances from the laboratory to clinical trials is only the first phase of the translational process. In the field of health research, “translation” is the process through which breakthroughs in science are used to improve human health. Unfortunately, many people in both the public and professional spheres perceive translational research simply as a linkage of biomedical and clinical research that expedites the transfer of scientific innovations from laboratories to clinical trials. Addressing the real-world issues that fall under the domain of phase 2 research translation is vital to eliminate health disparities because most of the inter-group variance in reductions in morbidity and mortality that can be attributed to newly developed treatments relates to the delivery of interventions at the provider-patient level, rather than differential pharmacodynamic effects of the treatments themselves. The health disparities model illustrates the perpetual flow of interdisciplinary collaboration that arises from the use of advances in biomedicine to reduce health disparities.

Introduction

The translational research model expounds upon this framework and provides a unifying structure that delineates the scope of the translational research paradigm. A vital but often overlooked first step in all health disparities research is clearly identifying the disparity and the root causes. For decades, published health data have provided evidence that racial and ethnic minorities are often disproportionately affected by many diseases and illnesses.

Public Health Research

It is important to be actively engaged with the community before initiating research aimed at curbing most racial and ethnic health disparities. Collaboration with researchers who have experience working with community-based organizations will help facilitate adherence to the principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR) throughout the translational process. Epidemiologic Assessment.

Epidemiologic assessment

It is intended to gather information pertaining to: characteristics of at-risk populations and community-specific etiology of health phenomena. From a practical standpoint, it is not essential for a new epidemiologic assessment to be the impetus for all translational research, but for health disparities research, researchers must be able to properly identify populations that are disproportionately affected by specific diseases or conditions.

Clinical Research

Traditional Clinical Trials: Therapeutic discovery research culminates in the initiation of exploratory clinical research. Randomized clinical trials have long been considered the gold standard for experimental medical research. These studies are vital for determining the independent effect of specific treatments on health outcomes.

Conclusion

In contrast to traditional clinical trials, practical trials incorporate environmental factors and are designed to assess the effectiveness of interventions in real-world conditions. Practical trials also differ from traditional clinical trials in that they only compare interventions amenable to implementation in broad community contexts, they enroll diverse study populations, they recruit from a variety of settings, and they measure a broad range of relevant health outcomes. For these reasons, practical trials can be used to directly inform evidence-based practice.