



A Health Research Agenda Guided by Migratory and Seasonal Farmworkers and the Providers Who Serve Them

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Health Research Agenda For Migratory and Seasonal Farmworkers

Background

This document shares the results of an almost two-year process to create a health research agenda specific to migratory and seasonal farmworkers. The purpose was to better understand what health outcomes are important to farmworkers in two Midwestern states and identify research and information gaps. A key strategy in accomplishing this work was not only to engage farmworkers in addition to providers, researchers and various other administrators but to do so in an active, direct and frequent manner, thus highlighting and elevating their voices and perspectives. This document is organized in that spirit.

Process Highlights

As a way to improve our understanding of potential health outcomes and information gaps, KU researchers spent the first year reviewing existing information and working with project partners to explore topics within the current context. A variety of activities were carried out: a review of the literature was completed, multiple meetings were held in Spanish with local farmworkers and in English with local providers, parallel surveys were administered to direct service providers and other key stakeholders working in locations throughout the United States, and conversations were held with national advisory partners. In year two, KU researchers organized the collected information into overarching themes and within those themes, research categories, as a way to help stakeholders review and respond to the range of information presented. Project partners, including the local farmworker group, worked through the themes and research categories, confirming the relevance to the health of farmworkers and fine tuning the details. Ultimately, the themes and research categories were placed into an oral/visual survey format and administered to farmworkers in two states to further inform this research agenda.

Results and Application Overview

Sharing the perspectives of farmworkers is a critical aspect of this work. Therefore, the results start with what migratory and seasonal farmworkers identified through the oral/visual survey as the most important topics for doctors/providers to have more information. Their top two research categories within each of the eight themes are displayed below. Next, topics from the provider surveys that were identified as critically important follow. The full details from the providers surveys are shared in a separate document. Appendix A shows the full list of the research categories by theme along with additional detailed information for more in-depth exploration. The detailed topics were derived from many sources including open-ended responses from the provider survey questions, feedback from farmworkers, and the literature. Finally, Appendix B provides summary information about the sources and methods that informed the development of the research agenda along with links to other project products.

Project providers who reviewed these results noted that in addition to identifying areas in need of research, the eight themes and various research categories shown in the research agenda offer ideas for agencies and providers to use in other ways as well. Specifically, the themes and research categories are areas agencies should consider covering when training new and existing staff working with farmworkers and can serve as topics to explore with farmworker clients to assess their individual needs, preferences and values as healthcare is delivered.

Farmworker Results

The following information shows the top two research categories in each of the eight themes based on 102 migratory and seasonal farmworkers completing a survey. Within each theme, farmworkers were asked to select the top topic that they felt was most important for doctors/providers to have more information and then select the one that was the second most important. The items displayed below were most frequently selected as one of the top two within that theme and are worded as shown on the oral/visual survey to which farmworkers responded.

1. Theme: Personal/Familial/Demographic
 - a. **Family Health**: Health Issues of your family members who are with you
 - b. **Family Relationships and Violence at Home**: How moving for work affects the family; how often violence happens at home
2. Theme: Job and Work Environment
 - a. **Safety and Work Accidents** – Common injuries, protective equipment and training
 - b. **Work Conditions and Satisfaction** – What it is like where you work; if there is water to drink and wash hands; time to eat; if pesticides are used
3. Theme: Other Things That Can Affect Health
 - a. **What You Eat/ Nutrition** – What food is available to eat; what makes it hard to eat healthy food
 - b. **Language and Education** – Amount of education; What makes it hard to visit the doctor if you don't speak or read in English
4. Theme: Health Practices
 - a. **Medicine** – How and where you get medicine; when you take it
 - b. **Staying Healthy** – What you do to stay healthy
5. Theme: Specific Health Topics
 - a. **Physical Health** – Common body pains or illnesses; how it affects your work
 - b. **Behavioral Health (mental health, drug alcohol, trauma)** – Feeling nervous or sad, alcohol use
6. Theme: Receiving Health Services
 - a. **Patient-Centered Care** – How to find out what is important to me; what makes me feel respected; front desk person showing kindness
 - b. **Treatment** – That doctors know what kind of treatment might work best for farmworkers
7. Theme: Health Access
 - a. **Doctors in the Area** – Who is in the area; hours they are available
 - b. **Resources and Health** – Helping to get other services like food and clothing; having someone help set up visits with the doctor
8. Theme: Policy and System
 - a. **The Overall Health System** – The possibility that farmworkers have to see doctors in different places
 - b. **How to Engage/Motivate Workers and Doctors to Participate in Research** – having farmworkers and providers involved in research to better serve farmworkers

Direct Service Provider and Other Key Stakeholder Results

Surveys were conducted with direct service providers and other key stakeholders early in the project to capture their perspective on various topics as inform this research agenda and to support the development of the farmworker oral/visual survey. Areas identified as being critically important for having more information/research are presented below, based on results from 36 direct service providers and 30 “other key stakeholders” (e.g., researchers, administrators, policy makers, funders), from different parts of the United States. The full results from these surveys are provided in another document (see Appendix B for more details).

Respondents were provided with various items, organized in four sections. For each item they were asked to indicate how important it was to have more information or research. Highlights follow for the respondent groups.

Results from the Direct Service Providers Survey

The items that were most often rated as being critically important to have more information to do their work fell under two overarching sections.

Context or Environment Related to Health and Health Care:

- [Transportation](#) with 63.4% of respondents selecting it as critically important
- [Availability of Providers](#) in areas where Migratory and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) live with 51.5% selecting it as critically important

Delivery of Healthcare Services:

- [Language Issues](#) (effective use of interpreters/translation tools) selected as critically important by 63.3% of direct service respondents
- [What Practices and Treatments Work](#) for MSFW as selected by 56.7% of respondents

Results from Other Key Stakeholders Survey (e.g., administrators, funders, policy makers, researchers)

The topics identified by this group of respondents as being critically important to have more research fell into three of the four overarching sections. The top items they selected as critically important were as follows.

Characteristics of the MSFW Population and the Health Care Issues They Face:

- [Prevalence of Behavioral Health Issues](#), selected by 60% as critically important
- [Social Determinants of Health](#) (education, housing, food), also with 60% selecting it as critical

Health Seeking Preferences and Behaviors:

- [Health Services that MSFW Say They Need](#), selected by 53.3%

Context or Environment Related to Health and Health Care:

- [Impact of Labor and Immigration Policy](#) on MSFW health access, selected by 53.3% as critical

Summary

This research agenda provides a listing of 35 research categories organized into eight themes related to the health and health care of migratory and seasonal farmworkers. Additional information is provided for each research category to provide more detailed ideas for in-depth exploration.

The results show areas of similarity but also difference among farmworker, provider and other stakeholder groups as to what topics need additional research and available information, underscoring the need to reflect on the purpose and intended audience(s) when undertaking future research. Topics that emerged of particular interest across farmworkers and providers/other stakeholders included behavioral health, addressing language barriers, treatments that work for farmworkers, and exploring other social determinants of health. Another area of high importance to the farmworkers was the health of family members who are with them.

An important part of this process was the inclusion of farmworkers, not only in completing surveys but in helping to guide the work throughout the project. Doing so increases the likelihood that the results will be applicable to providers and farmworkers alike as well as incorporate the expertise that farmworkers bring through their lived experiences in seeking and obtaining healthcare.

Appendix A – Research Themes, Categories and Areas for Potential Exploration (See Appendix B for Methods)

*Research categories in blue font are the top two research categories selected by farmworkers in two Midwest States for that theme.

Theme	Research Category	Additional Detailed Information for More In-depth Exploration
Personal/ Familial/ Demographic	Personal Goals	What led them to migrate? What brought them to the U.S.? What are their life goals? Goals for their children?
	Family Health	Health care issues for accompanying family members; Health barriers, challenges, and motivators for their children
	Numbers and Population Subsets	Indigenous workers; Young men’s issues (H2A); LGBTQ; Differences by streams; Similarities to other immigrant, refugees? Differences for men who are single or married (and those here without wives/girlfriends vs men here with family); Trends of workers’ homelands; Data trends over time; Data to analyze by gender, age, ethnicity, location
	Family Relationships and Domestic Violence	Migratory lifestyle impact on relationships with partners/spouses; Prevalence of domestic violence and effect of it on documentation/legal status; Single motherhood
Job and Work Environment	Safety & Work Accidents	Work-related injuries (frequency and what they do when injured); Pesticide issues; Safety signs; Drug testing for safety; Available equipment/protective gear/training provided; First aid; Work regulation/adherence (such as spraying rules)
	Mobility	Migration patterns; Impact of mobility on maintaining health records; Repeating procedures because records not accessible quickly enough; Tracking contagious illnesses (e.g. Hepatitis C, TB); Effect of mobility on what they can bring with them as they travel
	Role of Employers and Crew Leaders	What employers provide related to healthcare; How/if employers are a support or a barrier; How are workers treated; What is relationship with boss; Must work, even it sick? How employers view their role related to worker healthcare
	Work Conditions & Satisfaction	Do workers like their job; What is the environment like (availability of water, bathrooms; time to eat/take breaks); Effects/impact of pesticide and related exposure – awareness/recognition of; Weather and dehydration issues; Water to wash hands; How do workers feel at the end of the day?
Social Determinants of Health	Skills and Education	How does workers’ education, and/or (in)ability to speak English and/or (in)ability to read affect health care access/completion of paperwork? What is the role of education in breaking the cycle of vulnerability?
	Immigration Status and Discrimination	Impact of immigration policy (for example, no driver’s license or not feeling safe when driving); Not accessing services such as Food Stamps for fear of deportation or impact on naturalization; Experiences of discrimination
	Housing	Quality of housing provided; Under what conditions do they choose it; What are affordable housing models
	Nutrition	Availability of healthy food; Role of and barriers to good nutrition overall and as related to specific diagnoses such as diabetes; Impact of work on nutrition (no break to eat; self-limiting food to send more money home)
	Physical & Community Context	Rural environment/realities – isolation, limited access to goods and services (religious offerings in first language, recreation); Lack of sidewalks and non-highway roads that impact exercise, other access; Internet, cell limitations
	Salary & Economic Class	Pay rate, hours available, overtime, pay increases; Impact of child care on work (available, quality, options); How are health decisions made when time and money are limited; Differentiate between info for labor market and for doctor

Theme	Research Category	Additional Detailed Information for More In-depth Exploration
Health Practices	Sexual & Reproductive Health & Sexual Violence	Contraception and family planning; Issues of sexual harassment and rape; STDs and HIV
	Motivators to Seek/Not Seek Care	When is healthcare accessed? Role of: family, religion/spiritual beliefs, peer pressure; Role of fear and embarrassment in seeking care; What are other motivators to seeking care; Actions workers might do to keep working such as work through pain so no lost wages or taking pills until issue cannot be ignored; Impact on accessing care on wages; Difference in going or not if have pre-existing condition; Any differences by gender, or generation; What is role of health care education in worker seeking and/or receiving care; What is priority to farmworkers among work, play and health; What are reasons for not accessing some services such as lack of knowledge, barriers, and/or because available service is not what they want; Are there services offered/assumed to be desired by workers but are not or are not delivered in a culturally appropriate manner
	Personal/Preventative Actions to Maintaining Health	What actions do workers take to maintain good health/prevent illness such as eating well, doing self-care, exercising, wearing protective clothing, being careful to prevent accidents, regular check-ups, preventing from things getting worse, taking medicines, sleeping well, relaxing, resting, taking breaks at work, and using good hygiene (daily baths and washing hands; What are ways that workers maintain health outside of formal healthcare system; What is workers' education/literacy about health and health care
	Health: Viewed & Defined	How is good health defined and viewed; What are workers' attitudes towards health care
	Informal Social Supports	What are ways that workers support each other in the field/job setting; What is the role of humor, singing, friendship; To what extent are home remedies and/or native healers used
	Medication Issues	What is overall knowledge about medication? How medication is obtained (bringing in from home country, side markets; barriers to obtain); How is medication used such as extending dosage, sharing with others, saving it, using it to maximize ability to work); What are common side effects that are of concern; What education is needed; How/does medication usage relate to acceptance/understanding of the diagnosis; What are workers' perspectives on medication via injections; What is role of opioid usage related to working such as helping to work through pain

Theme	Research Category	Additional Detailed Information for More In-depth Exploration
Specific Health Topics	Behavioral	Holistic Health; Behavioral Health; Trauma and trauma informed care; Mental health stigma & addressing in camps; Substance Use/Abuse and its effect on their activities; MSFW stressors; How to provide treatment before they move
	Physical	Prevalence & impact of common health issues – joint/ back pain, eye injuries, hypertension, diabetes, asthma, and by type of work; Population health biometrics (BMI, blood glucose, blood pressure); Specialty (e.g., cancer by region)
	Dental/Oral Health	What is needed? What is wanted? Issue of periodontal disease
	Vision	Need for glasses; Eyes burning, watery or itchy; Eye diseases such as pterygium
Receiving Health Services	Engagement Between Farmworker & provider (Relationships)	Connecting/building relationships with providers; What creates trust/causes distrust? What are expectations, and how is healthcare different in U.S. than home country; How to engage workers in care and effectively serve them; Barriers to seeking care; What information do providers/workers need; What information do farmworkers want or wish that providers had to help them have good health?
	Treatment	What treatments work best for farmworkers; Strategies that lead to improved health outcomes; What services are needed
	Language of Services & Attention to Culture	Bilingual services; Impact of provider who speaks language vs in-person interpretation vs by telephone; Effective use of interpretation tools; Children as interpreters; Culturally competent services; Feelings of racism towards workers
	Patient-Centered Care (Overall; Processes)	Friendliness and compassion; Respect; Effect of short healthcare appointments; Provider knowledge of worker/lifestyle; What are workers' experiences of healthcare; Role and impact of front desk receptionist
Health Access	Transportation	What creative options might work for overall health care delivery models, especially for transportation, such as mobile clinics; Again, impact of immigration policy on driver's license, feeling safe to drive.
	Provider Availability	Availability of doctors/other health care providers in areas where workers live; Farmworker knowledge of where services are located; Hours the services are available; Availability, use and impact of telehealth/televideo services
	Resources and Supports	What support services are available including food, clothing and education; Which ones are desired; Cost of services*; Support related to insurance and financial resources; Support scheduling appointments and helping with paperwork issues; Outreach models that work; Availability of comprehensive community and health coordination
Policy and System and Engagement in Research	Policy	Impact of labor and immigration policy on worker health; Human rights/Workers' rights
	Workforce	Availability/location of; Workforce development; Community health workers/Promotoras; Non-conference training
	System	Identify solutions; Walk through system from worker perspective (including care in home community); Successful models of collaboration; Health records & database to increase provider communication; Role of advocacy; Role of hospitals/ clinics in serving workers; Consistency of services with migration; Translation of research into practice
	Engaging MSFWs and Providers in Research	Motivators to assist with research and planning meetings – role of food, payments, time to see each other, to learn, to help others, and to share information about farmworkers' experiences, difficulties and ideas.

*Cost of services and access to/availability of health insurance also fit into other categories such as access to care, motivators to seek care, and policy/system.

Appendix B – Methods

The development of this research agenda was identified as a key deliverable for an engagement award received by the University of Kansas (KU) Center for Research on behalf of the KU School of Social Welfare from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). In 2017, KU research staff began by partnering with various key stakeholders, including the Migrant Farmworkers Assistance Fund as the project's community co-lead. KU staff created three primary groups to help guide the work: a local collaborative group conducted in Spanish that was comprised of migratory and seasonal farmworkers and met multiple times throughout the project, a local providers group that was conducted in English and also was convened multiple times, and a national advisory partners group that provided guidance and reflections via one-on-one phone calls with KU staff. During the first year, KU staff also completed a review of the literature¹, administered two parallel surveys – one with direct service staff and one with other key stakeholders such as administrators, researchers, funders, and policy makers², and created a video to share information directly from farmworkers and providers³. The purpose of both reports was to help identify and begin prioritizing topics that are important to providing services and supports to farmworkers.

In early 2018, KU research staff reviewed the content from the activities mentioned above and began creating lists of topics identified as needing additional research or more information. Other materials with potentially relevant information were also reviewed including, for example, recent recommendations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Advisory Council on Migrant Health. KU researchers initially organized and displayed the various content in 10 themes and within the themes, identified specific research categories and topics for additional exploration. This document was then shared with the local providers group for review. KU researchers tailored that product for the local farmworkers group, creating a user-friendly format upon which they could review and reflect on the information. The feedback from these groups was used to continue to refine the themes, categories and topics for exploration that ultimately contained 35 research categories organized in eight themes and became Appendix A in this report. The content was also used to create an oral/visual survey for farmworkers described below.

The farmworker oral/visual survey was administered in the summer of 2018 to migratory and seasonal farmworkers in two Midwestern states. Each research category had a picture to represent the idea along with text in English and Spanish to describe the primary idea. After completing a human subjects informational statement, the interviewer reviewed the research category pictures within each theme, verbally describing them in either English or Spanish as preferred by the respondent. These steps were conducted to remove some of the more common language and literacy barriers.

Following an initial pilot process in which final modifications to the survey and process were made, a total of 102 farmworker surveys were completed. Each respondent received \$10 cash for participating. Farmworkers were asked to identify the category within each theme that was most important for doctors to have more information for better serving migratory and seasonal farmworkers. That answer received two points. Then they were asked to select the second most important category within that theme. Their second choice received one point. The remaining categories within the theme received zero points. The points for each research category were totaled for all 102 surveys as a way to select the top two categories within each of the eight themes. The results were shared with both local groups (providers and farmworkers) so they could share their reactions and help with the interpretation of the data.

¹ Review of the literature: <http://socwel.ku.edu/sites/socwel.ku.edu/files/images/general/Research/Highlights/PCori/4430-KUCR%20Literature%20Review%20-%20MSFW%20-%20Final.pdf>

² Results from Provider Surveys: <http://socwel.ku.edu/sites/socwel.ku.edu/files/images/general/Research/Highlights/PCori/Serving%20MSFWs%20-%20HC%20Research%20and%20Content%20Gaps%20FINAL.pdf>

³ Video: <https://youtu.be/kTBPfKOF-xM>