

Building adolescent research capacity: The co-creation of the Health Hive online course

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Background: Youth engagement is critical to intergenerational equity and ensuring research meets adolescent health and wellbeing needs, however it is not common practice (<1% of studies report youth input). Meaningful adolescent engagement requires tailored support and training, yet limited resources are available. This study aimed to co-create a freely accessible online course to build adolescent research capacity in public health.

Methods: Participatory research design, led by young people at all stages in collaboration with public health professionals and community partners (stakeholders). An evidence brief was developed synthesising literature reviews and diverse adolescents lived experience to inform course development. In March-25, a youth-led workshop was held with 21 stakeholders (50%, n=10, <30-years), to co-create course topics and structure through interactive group activities, dot-voting, and inclusive dialogue. Content was drafted with iterative rounds of feedback with all stakeholders. All stages were informed by Youth Participatory Action Research principles (participatory, inquiry-based, transformative), and grounded in Positive Youth Development Theory (e.g., strengths-based).

Results: Six core-modules were co-created: 1) Importance of youth engagement, 2) What is research? 3) What is ethics? 4) Mentally Safe Participation 5) How to get involved, 6) How to apply learnings. Consensus was reached on style and delivery of modules to enhance engagement, content credibility and trust, reflecting youth's priorities. The course adheres to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (e.g., live-captions, transcripts), and caters to different learning styles. The course will be hosted on Open edX (launch Oct-2025). Learners will receive a certificate and be connected to an adolescent research community of practice. Effectiveness will be tested through a mixed-methods evaluation.

Conclusion: We described the process of co-creating Australia's first accessible online course with adolescents, empowering adolescents as active contributors in public health research. Once live, it will create pathways for inclusive and sustained engagement, translating into evidenced-based research and policy.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The Health Hive is funded by Medical Research Futures Fund Consumer-Led Grant (#2023165). No conflicts of interest to declare.