

Wonder Drugs to Hot New Diets: Knowledge Is Power!

Adult Health Literacy

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Lauren taking Brandon's blood pressure during our diabetes and nutrition module

Introduction

Our Learning Community is comprised of multiple undergraduate and graduate students with various backgrounds: Public Health, Epidemiology, Global Health, Health Policy and Biology. We focused on tackling the health literacy gap among adults in communities all over the DC area. Our community partners included:

- **Emery House:** a men's transitional house-bed program
- **Mujeres Unidas** at Mary's Center: a women's support group
- **Whitman-Walker:** a community health center specializing in HIV/AIDS and LGBT care



Adnan updating the ISCOPE S bulletin board at Emery House

Our Recommendations

- Set up a Doodle poll to determine when everyone is free for weekly meetings. These will become necessary once your implementations start!
- Meeting minutes and conference calls are a good way to be cognizant of scheduling.
- Be creative with communication! Try texting apps, FaceTime, or phone calls in addition to email.
- Become friends! It is much easier to work within the group if you're having fun. Meeting outside of regular times will make you more comfortable with each other and open up more avenues of communication.
- Debrief right after every implementation to discuss how things went. Write a summary of what went well, what did not, and what you can change next time. Email it to the rest of your team to keep them all in the loop!
- Don't get discouraged if an implementation does not go exactly how you wanted it to go. Instead, take each session as a learning experience and don't get caught up in little details. Life happens.
- On your way to sites, listen to Sandy's Irish music. Just trust us.

What is health literacy?

- The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand health information and services needed to make health decisions.

Who is affected?

- Only 12% of adults have proficient health literacy.
- 9 out of 10 lack the skills necessary to manage their health and prevent illness.
- Education, language, culture, access to resources, and age are all factors that affect a person's health literacy skills.

What is the role of Public Health?

- Public health and health care professionals must work together to ensure that health information and services can be understood and used by everyone.

"I want to do what you all do - wear a blue shirt, be an ISCOPE S person, and help people."



Adult Health Literacy Team 2013-2014

Changes in Our Community

As members of the Adult Health Learning Team we are committed to educating clients at Emery House, Mary's Center, and Whitman Walker on relevant health topics. We provide information on available health resources within the DC area and empower them to make more informed health decisions.

- "I'm going to use this information to teach my son."
- "I'll think twice about drinking Mountain Dew."
- "I learned that there's good cholesterol and bad cholesterol."
- "You inspire me to do something meaningful."

Module Implementations

Whitman Walker

- We discussed key criteria relative to their own interaction with health information, and later applied it on the computer. The participants practiced informed searches relative to their own health situations, and were able to feel empowered.

Mary's Center

- With Mujeres Unidas, we established their knowledge of computers, focused on computer functions and how to navigate the internet. Later, we introduced them to medlineplus.gov, the simple and secure way to investigate health problems. In addition, we discussed potential biases throughout the internet world, and how information is not always secure.
- Working with the women's support group allowed us to build friendships and taught us how to better address misconceptions pertaining to medical care.

Emery House

- At Emery House we led a resume workshop, went through difficult interview situations, and edited resumes. The next week we discussed what to trust and what to question throughout all types of media.
- In our last session, we focused on the relationship between diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol, and healthy habits, discussing creative ways to make changes on a daily basis.

At each site we attempted to give them the tools that would allow them to find information and make choices to improve their health. By educating them on misinformation in the media and health information we gave them the power to advocate for their own health.

What We Learned

- It is crucial to play to each other's strengths, especially in an inter-professional team, where multiple disciplines and backgrounds play a role.
- We used our past experiences, whether it be familiarity with a different language or knowledge about a specific health topic, to effectively build and implement our modules for each site.
- Trust and respect were absolutely essential in planning and implementation!
- We learned that people are hungry for information and strongly desire to know everything they possibly can about their health.
- Communication is essential!
- With three different sites, keeping all members involved in some way with every site was of the utmost importance for having a cohesive team.
- Delegation is necessary. When there are multiple responsibilities and people relying on you to accomplish a task. With a large group of people, there are opportunities for everyone to be involved, even behind the scenes!



Team members implementing the ER vs Medical Home module at Mary's Center

KUDOS

We would like to thank our team advocate, Donna Javellana, for being a constant resource! We would also like to thank our coaches, Sandy Hoar, Karyn Pomerantz., and Scott Schroth for providing us with support and encouragement! Finally, we would like to thank Herb Baylor from Emery House, Maria Vethencourt and Juana Marquez from Mary's Center, Justin Goforth from Whitman Walker, and Stephen Mayeux from the Long Branch Library. We appreciate your willingness to work with our team!