HeLP MN Seniors: An Evidence-Based Health Literacy Program for Seniors

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Health Literacy

• The degree to which individuals can obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services they need to make appropriate health decisions\(^1\)
Health Literacy

• People with low health literacy typically:
  – Fail to seek preventive care
  – Are less likely to follow treatment plans
  – Have increased rates of hospitalization and use of emergency services
  – Have difficulty understanding written and oral communication
  – Stay in the hospital longer than someone with higher health literacy\(^2\)
Health & Seniors

• There are over 36 million adults over the age of 65 in the U.S.\textsuperscript{3}

• Seniors make up 13\% of the population, but 36\% of all hospital stays\textsuperscript{4}

• 25\% consider themselves in fair or poor health\textsuperscript{3}
Health & Seniors

• Seniors have lower health literacy levels than all other age groups\textsuperscript{5}

• Limited health literacy in seniors has been associated with a 2 fold risk of death\textsuperscript{6}

• As of 2009, 38\% of seniors are turning to the Internet for information, up from 18\% in 2007 and 7\% in 2001\textsuperscript{7}
HeLP MN Seniors

- NN/LM GMR Consumer Health Subcontract
  - Awarded in February 2009

- Goal
  - To develop an evidence-based program to improve the health literacy of seniors in Minnesota

- Objectives
  - Design and pilot a health literacy training program
  - Develop and reproduce a training guide
  - Expand HeLP MN Seniors across Minnesota
Key Partners

• University of Minnesota Health Sciences Libraries
• Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership
• Boutwells Landing Senior Living Community
• Public Health Consultants
Project Overview

• Year One
  • Conduct needs assessment
  • Develop training and workshop evaluation materials
  • Hold workshops
  • Complete outcomes assessment

• Year Two
  • Analyze evaluation results
  • Revise training materials
  • Promote training program
  • Facilitate implementation of program throughout Minnesota
Workshop Details

• Two, 1 ½ hour workshops
  • Health Literacy: Communicating Effectively with Health Care Providers
  • Finding Accurate and Reliable Health Information on the Internet

• Each workshop offered six times, for a total of 12 workshops

• Offered in September, October, and November 2009
Workshop Details

• Advertised through postcards, closed circuit television station, posters, and fliers
• Registration at the senior facility’s front desk, or at the monthly activity sign-up event
• Fifty-two participants, representing 33 individuals
Workshop I: Communicating with Providers

• Define health literacy
• Tips for communicating effectively with health care providers, including:
  • Asking questions
  • Creating a visit plan
  • Knowing the answer to 3 questions (Ask Me 3)
• Discuss current health topics
Workshop II: Finding Health Information

- Evaluating information on the Internet
  - MedlinePlus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing
- Hands-on demonstrations
  - MedlinePlus
  - My Health Minnesota -> Go Local
  - NIH Senior Health
  - Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research: Questions are the Answer
- Using health information
- Accessing Personal Health Records
Findings: Needs Assessment

• Evaluation Method
  • Focus groups

• Findings
  • All see providers regularly
  • Many concerned about staying informed
  • Many worried about others’ ability to self-advocate
  • Main sources of information are providers, information sheets, and Internet resources
  • Many concerned about drugs, healthcare costs, and access to personal health information

• Actions
  • Revised content to include current health topics and drug information
Findings: Workshop Evaluation

• Evaluation Method
  • Pre- and post-tests

• Findings
  • Multiple choice tests too time consuming
  • Results show increases on every post-test measure
  • Participants indicate they know what questions to ask and will ask questions until they understand
  • Participants report increased comfort in finding and evaluating online health information

• Action
  • Revised tests to Likert-scale format with added questions on content, format, and delivery
Findings: Outcomes Evaluation

• Evaluation Method
  – Survey, 55% response rate (initially planned as a focus group)

• Findings
  – Overall positive experience with workshops
  – More or same amount of information requested for each workshop
  – Both workshops would be recommended to friends
  – Several, but not all, workshop tools and tips were used by participants
Findings: Outcomes Evaluation

• Results show increases in every post-test measure, including:
  • Taking notes during medical appointments
  • Knowing what questions to ask, and asking questions until information is understood
  • Looking for, finding, and evaluating online health information
  • Discussing information with healthcare providers
Program Adjustments

Workshops:

• Removed redundant content, information on unused tools and tips, background information, and current topics in health

• Formatted workshop presentations and supporting materials to increase readability and visual appeal
Program Adjustments

• Supporting Materials:
  • Created program guide that includes lessons learned from evaluation findings and program implementation
  • Created a Demonstration Guide for websites used in Workshop II
Website Materials

www.healthliteracymn.org/resources/help-mn-seniors

- Website materials include:
  - A program guide with helpful tips
  - A needs assessment focus group guiding questions
  - Workshop presentations with instructor scripts
  - Workshop handouts and pre- and post-tests
  - A post-workshop survey
  - A website demonstration guide
  - Contact information
Program Promotion

• Presentations
  • Institute of Healthcare Advancement Health Literacy Conference
  • Annual Minnesota Geriatric Care Conference
  • Medical Library Association
  • Boutwells Landing Celebration Event
  • Midwest Chapter/Medical Library Association

• Exhibits
  • Minnesota Library Association
  • Aging Services of Minnesota Institute
Celebration Event

• 32 Attendees
  • Public health, health care, health literacy, and health education
  • Boutwells Landing residents

• Presentation
  • Brief overview of workshops
  • Findings
  • How others can get involved

• Networking opportunity
Questions?

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• References