Literacy Assistance Center

Incorporating Research
Health Communications

Three converging forces creating a significant challenge to existing methods of communication with low literate groups:

• increasing numbers of people with limited English proficiency,
• declining literacy rates, and
• widening wage gaps.
Study AIMS:

• The aims of the proposed mixed-methods study are to examine the following in the context of 12 NYC advanced ESOL adult literacy class with a focus on functional health literacy skills:
Study AIMS

• Describe the patterns of adoption of functional health literacy skills, including which skills are adopted and by whom and which factors influence adoption.

• This aim will be achieved by administering a survey to 12 classes adult learners (180 total) at the end of each semester-long health literacy course. The survey will measure adult learners’ perceptions and adoption of health literacy skills based on DOI theory.
Study AIMS

- Determine the social processes and contexts that facilitate transmission of functional health literacy skills.

To assess diffusion of skills to friends and family, 30 adult learners will be interviewed to examine the conditions under which adult learners shared or withheld health literacy skills, by what processes were skills shared, how sharing or withholding skills made adult learners feel, and barriers and facilitators to sharing skills.
Study AIMS

Describe the ways in which adult educators use adult learning theory to teach functional health literacy skills.

To understand these processes, 6 adult educators and the facilitator of the Health Literacy Study Circles+ Will be interviewed to explain how adult learning theory is incorporated into training adult educators to teach functional health literacy skills to ESOL adults and how adult educators use this theory in the classroom.
Study AIMS

Lay the foundation for increased communication between public health researchers, health sector workers, and adult educators.

This aim will be accomplished by conducting semi-structured interviews with adult educators and their health sector partners to determine what aspects of their partnership helped to bridge the communication gap and how the partnership affected their own practice.
The LAC offers health literacy curriculum development workshops, called Health Literacy Study Circles+ for local adult educators. They focus on three areas:

• health care access and navigation,
• chronic disease management, and
• disease prevention and screening
Impact

Adult learners found the health content to be relevant and immediately useful

They increased their ability to fill out forms, read medicine labels, ask health related questions, obtain health insurance, seek preventive services, and speak with health personnel without a translator

They also felt empowered to manage their health and that of their families and shared health information with their friends and family.
Selection of Partners

First, while other programs across the country implement various forms of health literacy training, all adult literacy program partners in the LAC health literacy initiative have received the same comprehensive training through the Health Literacy Study Circles+. 
Partner Selection

- Second, the LAC has established connections with each of these adult literacy programs and has a history of successful partnership with health care organizations throughout the city and with academic institutions such as Harvard University. While it can be challenging to find community partners willing to work with researchers, the LAC has demonstrated success in working with professionals in each of these three important areas, making it a model for developing similar partnerships elsewhere.
Partner Selection

Third, NYC has one of the largest immigrant and refugee populations in the US, and the LAC’s adult literacy program partners work with a wide cross-section of ESOL adult learners. Only a few cities have such a diverse population, and NYC’s adult literacy programs are an ideal place to gain access to a heterogeneous ESOL population.
Dissemination

- A brief summary report describing the findings will be written, taking great care to explain all terms and keep jargon to a minimum, in order to facilitate greater communication between all stakeholders. The report will be distributed to the LAC’s key stakeholders and partners, including all of LAC’s adult educators and their health system partners.
Dissemination

• We will also post a downloadable version of the report online and will distribute the link widely using health literacy and adult education listserves.

• Finally, in order to facilitate greater communication between public health researchers and adult educators, findings from this study will be submitted to prominent journals and conferences in both fields.
Investigative Team

- Kathleen R. Miner, Ph.D., MPH, CHES, Principal Investigator, is the Associate Dean for Applied Public Health in the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University and Associate Professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education.
- Ruth M. Parker, M.D., consultant, is a Professor of Medicine in the Department of Medicine at Emory University.
- Rima Rudd, ScD, MSPH, consultant, is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Society, Human Development, and Health at Harvard University.
- Hannah L. F. Cooper, ScD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education at the Rollins School of Public Health.
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