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Health Promotion in 7 Minutes

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SYLLABUS SELECTION

Innovative Learning Activity

Health Promotion in 7 Minutes

Health education in the workplace is an effective strategy for changing risky health behaviors. This article describes a unique approach used by faculty and students in the baccalaureate nursing program at Western Kentucky University (WKU) and the safety committee members at a local UPS™ center in south central Kentucky.

Description

While seeking service-learning opportunities for nursing students at occupational sites, the WKU nursing faculty forged a partnership with representatives from the UPS center and discussed the need for employee health education. The UPS drivers participate in daily 7-minute, pre-work communication meetings, which focus on health and safety issues and are facilitated by the center manager. Despite the brevity, the WKU faculty recognized this as an excellent opportunity to provide health education to a specific population.

Each month, a team of faculty and students presented health promotion information that correlated with the topics found in the UPS North Central Region Health and Wellness Program Monthly Index. For example, the focus of the UPS wellness program in February was cardiovascular disease; therefore, the WKU presentation was titled "Healthy Heart."

Presentations, enhanced with PowerPoint® slides, were projected onto a sheet hung on a lowered overhead door. Using the constructivist approach, the team included well-rec-

ognized visual aids to facilitate learning (Vandever & Norton, 2005). For example, a cream-filled cookie was used to simulate vertebrae and the nucleus propulsus.

Time for questions and answers was allotted at the end of each presentation; however, due to increased awareness of personal health issues, most questions came from individuals after the sessions concluded. The team noted these as excellent examples of impromptu teaching moments. To reinforce the health information after leaving the site, the team provided educational materials related to the monthly topic and left them for the safety committee members to post in highly visible locations.

Challenges

One challenge for team members was the briefness of the presentations, which lasted no longer than 7 minutes. In this task, it was implicit to immediately capture the audience's attention, present key concepts in a concise manner, and leave attendees with an important take-home message. The health promotion activities took place in the center of the loading bay, with ambient industrial noise present. Approximately 30 to 40 UPS employees regularly attended each session. Team members had to be flexible and adapt their teaching strategies to be effective in an informal, large and open space.

Project Success

Service-learning can be accomplished by engaging students in their local communities (Valerius & Hamilton, 2001). During the academic

year, students were included as presenters in the health promotion activities, which provided opportunities for continued student engagement and hands-on experience in sharing knowledge to promote positive health behaviors.

This innovative outreach project has built bridges with the community and produced numerous positive, unplanned outcomes. UPS Business Manager Gill Fleek stated:

Safety is the backbone of UPS. The dedicated partnership between WKU nursing faculty and UPS Safety Committee members has created a strong health promotion and safety message to the employees of UPS.... The efforts have not only built a safe atmosphere to work in, but have increased employee morale as well.

Faculty found that it does not take a year—or even a day—to promote health education. It can all begin with a 7-minute health promotion presentation at the worksite.

References

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