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Serina Subedi

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, s.subedi@usa.edu

Rocio Alvarenga

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, ralvarenga@usa.edu

Lisa Griggs-Stapleton

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, lstapleton@usa.edu

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Health Literacy and Occupation-Based Education for Healthcare Providers Serving Hispanic Americans

Serina N. Subedi, Rocio Alvarenga, EdD, OTR, Lisa Griggs-Stapleton, PhD, OTR

BACKGROUND

Health literacy is described as the extent to which individuals have the skills to understand, find, and use health-related information and services for themselves and others. There is a lack of healthcare services in rural communities because: declining population, shortages of healthcare professionals, language barriers, economic stagnation, underinsured residents, and geographic isolation. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2022).

PROBLEM

Many individuals who lack education, have limited English-proficiency, poor socioeconomic status, and live in rural areas have trouble receiving adequate health care services due to geographical location and shortages of healthcare professionals (Gostin & Friedman, 2020).

PURPOSE

The purpose of the capstone program is to develop a program to inform healthcare practitioners on occupation-based education and the effects of poor health literacy and methods and techniques to address low health literacy serving Hispanic Americans.

Outcome objectives:

1. A needs assessment was completed to identify the occupational needs of individuals at the site.
2. A program was developed that provides insight to healthcare practitioners on health literacy barriers that the Hispanic population face and methods for addressing them.
3. Educational resources were created to inform the healthcare practitioners on health literacy, and support their clients who primarily speak Spanish
4. The effectiveness of the program implementation was evaluated by observation and obtaining verbal feedback from staff and patients.

METHODS

- Needs assessment included 2 pre-surveys that was given to the patients and the therapists at Amistad Physical Therapy
- 10 patients participated in the pre-survey
- 5 therapists participated in the pre-survey - 3 physical therapists and 2 physical therapy assistants
- **Pre-survey - Patients:** Survey about the patient's background, satisfaction levels with their healthcare providers, frequency of needing assistance, and their language proficiency
- **Pre-survey - Therapists:** Survey about the therapists understanding of health literacy, confidence when working with a primarily Spanish-speaking patient, the use of a translator and impact it has on their therapy sessions, and their Spanish proficiency

Topics covered:

1. Introduction and greetings in Spanish
 2. Cultural Competency and Cultural Humility
 3. Health Literacy in the Hispanic Population
 4. Hispanic Culture and Customs
 5. Methods of Addressing Health Literacy Barriers
 6. Summary of each module
- The WIX application was utilized to develop the program that included educational modules and informative resources based on the findings from the needs assessment
 - List of variety of additional websites in Spanish were included to facilitate ease of understanding for predominately Spanish-speaking patients

PROGRAM

General Program Goals:

1. Increase therapist understanding of health literacy
2. Develop and deliver educational modules that effectively equip healthcare practitioners with the skills and knowledge to work with individuals from a diverse background
3. Improve health care outcomes for individuals who experience health literacy barriers
4. Promote the role of occupational therapy to the clinic's community

Theoretical Framework:

1. The Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance Conceptual Framework

Activities:

1. Education on health literacy, cultural competency and cultural humility, Hispanic culture and customs, and methods in addressing health literacy barriers
2. Basic Spanish lessons
3. Techniques to address health literacy barriers – Journaling
4. Techniques to bridge the communication barrier – Small Talk



Conclusions / Future Directions

- Hispanic patients experience less timely medical care, worse communication with providers, and greater dissatisfaction with health care overall (Steinberg et al., 2016).
 - It is visible that healthcare disparities are present; however, it does not seem to change as the disparities continue to persist throughout the United States healthcare system (Casey et al., 2020).
- ### Future Directions:
- Collaboration with other healthcare practitioners is needed to develop additional resources that could support individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.
 - Based on the post-survey, necessary modifications will be made to the capstone program and will be shared with other healthcare organizations located in rural communities.

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