Health Literacy and Health Education: Research and Practical Applications

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INTRODUCTION

Health Literacy and Health Education: Research and Practical Applications

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Helen Osbourne\(^1\) states in her book, *Health Literacy from A to Z*, that health literacy is about communicating health information in ways others can understand. It has three central components: communication skills of the person expressing a message; learning needs of each person. This statement underscores The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s statement that health literacy is important in both personal and organizational contexts and accomplished through: (1) emphasizing people’s ability to use health information rather than just understand it; (2) focusing on the ability to make “well-informed” decisions rather than “appropriate” ones; (3) incorporating a public health perspective; and (4) acknowledge that organizations have a responsibility to address health literacy.\(^2\) These statements provide a good context for examining the relationship between health literacy and health education.

Health Literacy continues to be an important component of health education regardless of the practice setting. Most, if not all of us in health education use and/or operationalize health literacy concepts in our work. Given all the recent attention on the importance of health literacy, the Editorial Board of the *American Journal of Health Education* (AJHE) felt that it would be helpful to the profession to dedicate a special issue to Health Literacy and Health Education. In Spring, an invitation to submit manuscripts for the special AJHE issue on Health Literacy and Health Education: Research and Practical Applications was widely distributed.

Many excellent articles were submitted and accepted. The majority of the articles are included in this issue but because of space limitations a few of the articles will appear in a future AJHE issue. This special issue of the *American Journal of Health Education*, Health Literacy and Health Education: Research and Practical Applications contains three feature articles, five research articles and two commentaries.

Feature articles

**Historical and Contemporary Aspects of Health Literacy in Certified Health Education Practice** (Hedman-Robertson, Allison, Kerr and Lysoby) provides a comprehensive examination of health literacy and health education and in particular how health literacy is incorporated into the NCHEC Areas of Responsibility and related competencies. A related article, *Advancing Professional Development in Health Literacy: The Health Literacy Specialist Certificate Program and the Health Literacy Solutions Center* (Gonzalez and Villaire) highlights the work of the Institute for Healthcare Advancement and the development implementation of the Health Literacy Specialist Certificate Program and the Health Literacy Solutions Center which is an opportunity to connect with others and enhance health literacy skills. The last feature article, *Strategies for Introductory Health Literacy Education Using Fundamental, Case-based, and Simulated Learning Experiences in Undergraduate Health Education* (Crossman) provides a valuable look at strategies for designing and facilitating introductory health literacy education through a compendium of learning activities, a case-study project, and simulated learning experiences.

Research articles

**Educational Strategies for Secondary Stroke Prevention: An Integrative Literature Review** (Tarihoran, Honey, Slark) provides a review of the literature concerning secondary stroke prevention that focuses on education strategies for patients after stroke to reduce their risk of having another stroke. Health literacy concepts are operationalized in Readability, Suitability, and Content Evaluation of Initial, Online Masking Guidance from U.S. States during the COVID-19 Pandemic (McCrea, Piccoli, Krier, Felter, van Panhuys). This study focused on evaluating the readability, suitability, and content of masking guidance from the United States Department of State...
and health department websites. *Child Dehydration Management: A Health Literacy-Focused Resource Analysis* (Bhavsar, Hohman, Stinson, Wallace) assesses usability, accessibility, complexity, and readability of diverse pediatric dehydration educational materials. A study designed to improve patient-centered chronic diseases management through identifying aspects of health literacy for which individual refugees require additional support is presented in *Development and Initial Validation of the Refugee Health Literacy Assessment Tool (RHLAT)* (Harris, Colvin, Lindner, Manganello, Mohamed, Shaw). Using health literacy measures to assesses the understandability and action-ability of the content in a food quality screener are presented in *Utilizing Health Literacy Measures to Assess the Content of a Food Quality Screener for Understandability and Actionability* (Kotecki, Greene, Jones).

**Commentaries**


In summary, this special issue contains a balance of health literacy and health education articles that we hope will be helpful to readers. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Jim Eddy, AJHE Editor-in-Chief and the American Journal of Health Education Editorial Board for both the decision to create a special issue on Health Literacy and Health Education and asking me to be the Guest Editor. Special thanks to Dr. Elise Eifert for her excellent and tedious work on verifying article references and format for each manuscript and her work on production of the Journal.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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