Dubbing Health Literacy Initiative: Impact and Sustainability

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BACKGROUND

- Lower levels of health literacy are correlated with worse status for many conditions, including diabetes, heart failure, cancer, and HIV.
- Only 12% of Americans have found to have proficient health literacy.1
- While the quality of care in Durham is high relative to the rest of North Carolina, significant socioeconomic, racial and ethnic health care disparities exist.3
- Durham Health Literacy Initiative (HLI) represents a collaboration between Durham educators and middle school students, and Durham graduate health students from Duke Health and North Carolina Central University

AIMS

1) Strengthen the health literacy of Durham youth
2) Empower Durham youth to be health literacy ambassadors
3) Enhance the communication skills of Duke Health students
4) Initiate Sustainability Plan

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- Durham HLI was launched in 2016 with the support of the Duke Health Chancellor’s Service Fellowship and was expanded and sustained with the support of the 2018-2019 NC Albert Schweitzer Fellowship
- Program students include 6th-8th graders from Healthy Start Academy and Student U in Durham
- Volunteer teachers include Durham graduate health volunteers come from Duke Health and North Carolina Central University’s nursing, physician assistant, physical therapy, social work, speech pathology and medical specialties.
- The program's eight-part curriculum incorporates a wide-variety of topics such as nutrition, chronic illness, mental health, substance abuse, and emergency medicine.
- Completion of the program is celebrated with a Health Fair, hosted by the education sites and HLI volunteers, with health organizations and resource groups invited from the community.

RESULTS STATEMENTS

- 24 of 28 middle school students enrolled in HLI scored “high health literacy” in at least one of the three scales measured on the Health Literacy Assessment Scale for Adolescents (HAS-A) after program completion. 22% scored “high health literacy” in all three scales, and 56% scored “high health literacy” in at least two scales.
- 67% of students served by HLI had a pre-program HAS-A score of “low health literacy” in all three scales measured (Communication, Confusion, Functional Health Literacy) saw an improvement in their HAS-A score to “high health literacy” in at least one of the three categories measured.
- 7 volunteer teachers completed retrospective pre- and post-program survey. All surveyed teachers participated in at least 3 in-class sessions, with 57% participating in 5 or more.
- All teachers surveyed reported that “[they] understood the health concerns of Durham youth” better after HLI than before. About half of our teachers reported feeling more comfortable “socializing,” “educating,” and “discussing health with pediatric patients” after HLI.
- 71% of teachers surveyed reported that HLI improved their ability to communicate with peers from other health professions.
- All teachers surveyed said they would consider volunteering again

TABLE 1: SUMMARY STATISTICS

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<th>Scale 1 Communication</th>
<th>Scale 2 Confusion</th>
<th>Scale 3 Functional Health Literacy</th>
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<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
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CONCLUSIONS

- On average students of all ages enrolled in Durham HLI saw an improvement in their Communication Scale and Functional Health Literacy Scale as measured by the HAS-A from “Low” to “High Health Literacy”
- Positive improvements in HAS-A scores were more notable among 7th grade students than 8th grade students.
- At baseline, students scored best on the Functional Health Literacy Scale of the HAS-A and worst on the Confusion Scale.

LIMITATIONS

- Small sample size (n = 28)
- Standardized health literacy scale
- Some inflation in pre-program survey scores may be expected, resulting in apparent worsening in HAS-A scores.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

- Durham HLI will partner with the Duke School of Medicine Multicultural Resource Center (MCRC) and Office of Diversity and Inclusion for leadership and organizational support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES