

Education of the Nurse Resident in Relation to Health Literacy: Inform, Empower, Enable

Carolee Czarnecki MSN, RN, CGRN

Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center and Alverno College of Nursing, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Health Literacy: “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions (Ratzan & Parker, 2000, p. vi).”

Background/Significance

- Low health literacy is a major source of economic burden on the U.S. healthcare system (Vernon, Trujillo, Rosenbaum, & DeBuono, n.d.).
- Estimated financial burden is 1.6 to 3.6 trillion dollars (Vernon, Trujillo, Rosenbaum, & DeBuono, n.d.).
- Seventy-seven million Americans have basic or below basic levels of health literacy (HHS, n.d.).
- Only 12 percent of Americans are proficient in health literacy, which means 88% percent of the population are challenged by the healthcare system (Wisconsin Health Literacy, n.d.).
- Highest groups represented are individuals with lower education levels, racial and ethnic minorities, the uninsured and the elderly (Berkman et al., 2011).

Problem

- There is a striking absence of curriculum focused on health literacy in relation to nursing education found in the literature (Coleman, 2011).
- Nurses often overestimate the level of health literacy of their patients (Dickens, Lambert, Cromwell & Piano, 2013; Goggins, Wallston, Mion, Cawthon, & Kripalani, 2016).
- Nurses are not adequately trained to effectively identify patients with low health literacy (Toronto and Weatherford, 2016).
- Failure to recognize the level of health literacy can lead to increased hospitalizations, poorer health, and higher mortality (Berkman et al., 2011).

Aim

- To develop an educational program to increase nurse residents' knowledge of health literacy and increase their ability to effectively interact and educate patients with low literacy levels.

Design/Method

Setting: A 938-bed, 4-time Magnet recognized, urban quaternary medical center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

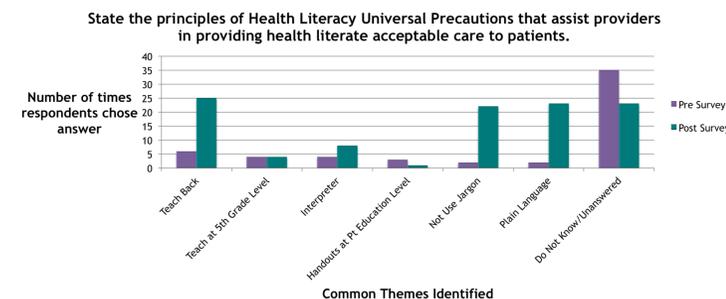
Target Population: A cohort of nurses (n=85) with less than one year of nursing experience participating in a one year long nurse residency program.

Theoretical Framework: Patricia Benner's Novice to Expert Theory and Madeleine Leininger's Culture Care Theory of Diversity and Universality

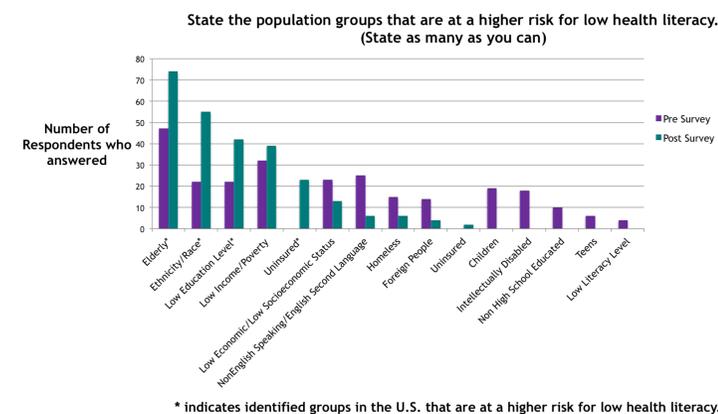
Quantitative Assessment Method: Pre/Post Survey

Findings

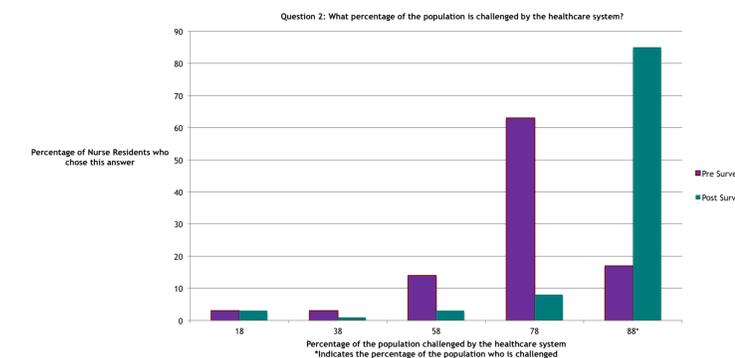
Post survey indicated respondents had an increased awareness of Health Literacy Universal Precautions, helpful tools that assist caregivers to teach more effectively.



Post survey demonstrated increased knowledge regarding population groups who are at a higher risk for low health literacy



Knowledge regarding the percentage of the population challenged by the healthcare system



Findings

Assessment of Literacy

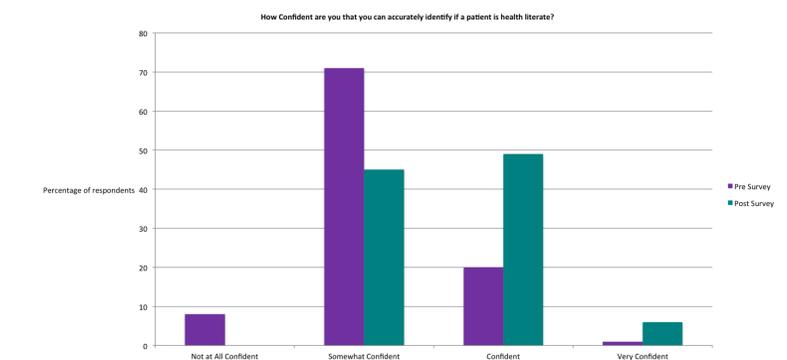
- Single Item Literacy Screener (SILS) assessment tool
 - Knowledge of tool increased from 22% pre survey to 70% post survey.

Nurses Intent to Assess Health Literacy

- Pre survey- 36% of the nurses assess for health literacy in their patients “Often”, and 3% “Very Often”.
- Post survey- nurses intend to assess for health literacy in their patients 54% “Often”, and 26% “Very Often”.

Nurse Confidence in Assessment of Health Literacy:

- Confidence of accurately identifying a patient as health literate increased from 21% as confident or very confident pre-survey to 55% as confident or very confident post-survey.



Future Implications

- Health literacy education increased the knowledge of nurse residents about health literacy and should be integrated into nurse residency programs.
- Health literacy assessment should be included in patient education programs to promote optimal patient education.

References: Available upon request

Acknowledgements: Thank you to Joanne Archer MSN, RN, CNS BC-ADM, Assistant Professor at Alverno College for her guidance and support on this project. Donna Rose MS, RN, Clinical Nurse Specialist- Simulation/Education ASLMC for your assistance. The Nurse Residents of ASLMC who participated in this project.