

An innovative, community-based model for teaching medical students about health literacy by collaborating with the *Eat Healthy, Stay Active!* program

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Background

Medical schools have the opportunity to teach future physicians about health literacy and improve patient-doctor communication, but many fall short.

- The Institute of Medicine recommends teaching students about health literacy, but currently no published guidelines for implementing health literacy training into medical school curricula
- Common strategy: up to 3h of didactic sessions about health literacy and communication included during the first 2 (pre-clinical) years, ± simulation experiences, standardized patients, and role play
- Incorporating a longitudinal, community-based experience in health literacy may be an effective way for students to learn
- Studies show moderate- to high-level interventions from physicians effectively help patients develop health literacy skills
- Improvement of patients' health literacy skills may rely on providers' capacity to undertake more sophisticated interventions
- Health literacy is a crucial element of training future physicians because it has been shown to be a determinant of health outcomes

Objectives

- Enhanced medical student understanding about the concept of health literacy and its impact on health care from patient and provider perspectives
- Students will observe effective communication strategies for approaching families with low literacy and demonstrate understanding by using teach-back, motivational interviewing, and avoiding jargon
- Understand the value of incorporating health literacy and cultural values into structure community health promotion
- Understand the culture of poverty by direct interaction with Head Start families in Columbia MO
- Learn about how a community-based, ecologic approach can be used to address prevention of pediatric obesity
- Recognize the challenges of introducing and maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle for families and young children

Eat Healthy, Stay Active!

- Eat Healthy, Stay Active!* (EHSA) is a program developed by Dr Ariella Herman, Research Director of the Health Care Institute (HCI) based at the UCLA Anderson School of Management
- EHSA is a low literacy, health promotion program that addresses pediatric obesity prevention in the Head Start community with a tri-level intervention that includes staff, parents, and children
- A national pilot has been completed that showed increased knowledge and behavior change and favorable improvement in BMI for staff, parents, and children
- Mernell King, director at Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA), has worked with the HCI for many years, successfully implementing programs on other health topics
- The program consists of a staff training, 3 core trainings with parents, several workshops for reinforcement, and a coordinated classroom curriculum for children led by classroom teachers
- UCLA provides the uniquely designed low literacy curriculum in English and Spanish



Timeline

- January-July 2013: Guiding Coalition meetings to plan intervention, envision contribution from each partner, and develop curriculum for medical students
- August 2013: Head Start staff begins implementation of EHSA; recruit medical students who volunteer through the Pediatrics Interest Group
- Fall 2013: Training medical students (see “Curriculum”)
- January-June 2014: Medical students participate in training for parents and children

Medical student curriculum

- First (M1) and second (M2) year medical students who are members of the Pediatrics Interest Group will volunteer to participate in the program and commit to participating during the academic year.
- Didactic sessions: introduction to Central Missouri Community Action-Head Start, poverty simulation, culture of poverty training, *Clear Understanding* series (Health Literacy Missouri)
- Home visits: accompany Head Start staff on home visits, meet family, assist with screenings (eg hearing, nutrition)
- Classroom visits: interact with Head Start teachers and students who are participating in EHSA
- Pre-program: interview families to administer pre-survey instrument, validated health literacy tool, and collect BMI according to protocol
- Program: Attend training sessions, assist facilitator
- Post-program: interview families to administer post-survey instrument, re-measure health literacy, and re-measure BMI

References & acknowledgements

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