Does a Health Literacy Question Belong on the BRFSS?

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What is the BRFSS?

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a nationwide survey. It is administered each year by each of the states. The data from these surveys provides the basis for many population-level health statistics (such as diabetes prevalence, smoking rates, etc.) BRFSS results impact policy, funding, and programs at the national-, state- and county-level data.

Core Questions and Modules

The BRFFSS is made up of a core set of questions that cover topics such as, tobacco use, car safety, obesity, exercise... In addition, a pre-approved menu of optional "modules" cover a number of other health topics. In cases where states or their constituents are interested in information not included in the core questions, states can choose and to add items. If modules are not available that cover the issue of interest, states can include items from other sources. Currently, there is no approved Health Literacy module to include in the BRFSS survey.

Existing, single questions that measure health literacy may be appropriate to incorporate into the BRFSS.

Health literacy and literacy are strong predictors of negative health outcomes… sometimes stronger than other variables included in the Core Questions of the BRFSS such as race, age, and socioeconomic status.

(DeWalt, et al., 2004; Osborn, et al., 2007; Volandes et al., 2008)

Limited Health Literacy is associated with a range of negative health outcomes considered in the BRFSS.

- Failing to use preventive practices
- Poor disease self-management
- Treatment mistakes
- Increasesd hospitalization and hospital readmissions
- Death

Communities want city- and county-level health literacy data.

☑ **"How confident are you filling out medical forms yourself?"** (Chew et al., 2008)

0-Extremely, 1-Quite A Bit, 2-Somewhat , 3-A Little Bit , 4-Not At All

☑ **"How often do you need to have someone help you when you read instructions, pamphlets, or other written material from your doctor or pharmacy?"** (Morris et al., 2006)

1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Sometimes, 4-Often, 5-Always

☑ **Other options?**

Attach your Post-it note with other options here.

Health Literacy Nebraska's BRFSS Work Group Process

At our Statewide Summit, we presented the idea of including a health literacy item on the BRFSS.

- ✓ January 2013 BRFSS Work Group formed at the Statewide Summit. The group includes advocates within Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to help with the process.
- ✓ April 2013 Work Group met with the state BRFSS Coordinator to discus the process and cost.
- ✓ August 2013 BRFSS Work Group will formally propose 2 questions for next round of survey administration.
- ✓ October 2013 DHHS will decide whether or not to accept the health literacy questions. If accepted, each question costs $2,000.
- ✓ January 2014 target roll out of 2 questions; data collected during 2014.
- ✓ January-June 2015 Data analyses by the CDC.
- ✓ July 2015 Results will be provided to Health Literacy Nebraska.

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