

Health Literacy Photo Scavenger Hunt: Using the Public Transportation System to Help Students Understand Patient Challenges in Navigating a Health System

Amy Tiemeier, PharmD, BCPS, Tricia Berry PharmD, BCPS, Peter Hurd, PhD, Jason Wang, student pharmacist, Davin Patel, student pharmacist

St. Louis College of Pharmacy, St. Louis, Missouri

Objectives

St. Louis College of Pharmacy held a Health Literacy Day for students on February 23rd, 2011. The objectives for the event were to:

- 1) Increase awareness of health literacy and its importance in healthcare.
- 2) Recognize risks and challenges for patients with low health literacy.
- 3) Develop empathy for patients with low health literacy.

Approach

Students who participated in the day's activities had a 1 hour overview lecture of health literacy from a representative from Health Literacy Missouri and participated in an experience designed to simulate learning a new "system".

The lecture was an interactive session customized to the students' prior exposure and experience with basic health literacy concepts within the curriculum. Health literacy and cultural competency were the main areas of emphasis for the session.

After the lecture, students divided into groups of 3-5 students and received a packet for a photo scavenger hunt ("Walking in a Patient's Shoes"). During the scavenger hunt, students had to navigate St. Louis public transit system (Metro) to get to two St. Louis landmarks before returning to the college. As the scavenger hunt progressed, students were given less information for completing the subsequent steps. Metro donated day passes for all the students to use for the scavenger hunt and all students used Metro Link (light rail) AND Metro Bus on their scavenger hunt. Each group had to take photos at the locations they visited such as Busch Stadium, Ted Drews, and the Missouri Botanical Gardens. Prizes were given to the groups in each class year who had the most creative pictures.

Navigating the transit system with varying amounts of information was designed to mimic a patient navigating a health system. Upon completion of the scavenger hunt, students completed an anonymous survey regarding their experience.

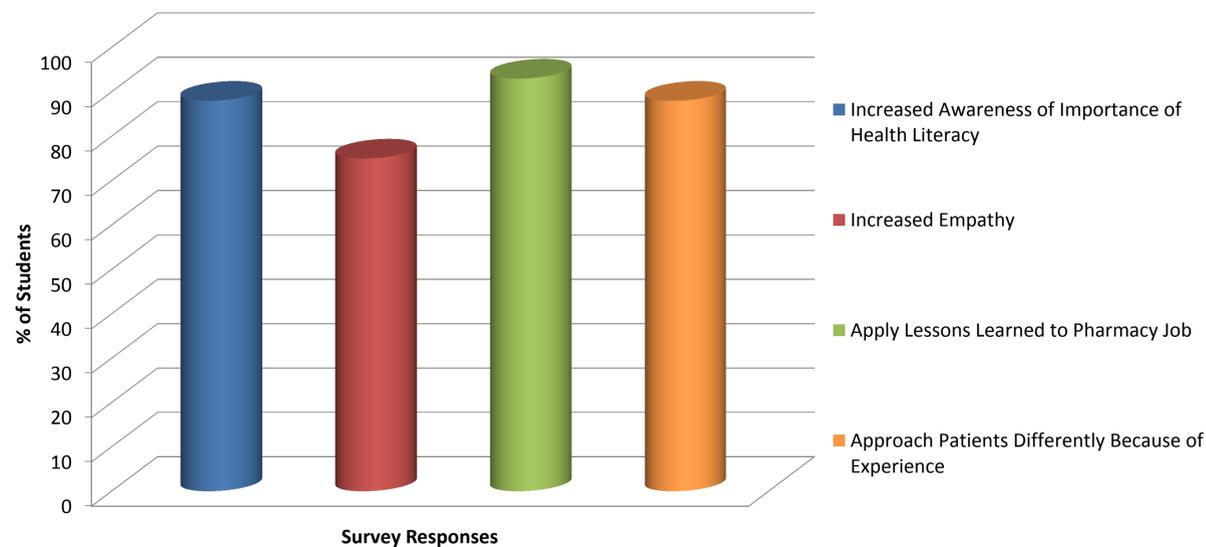
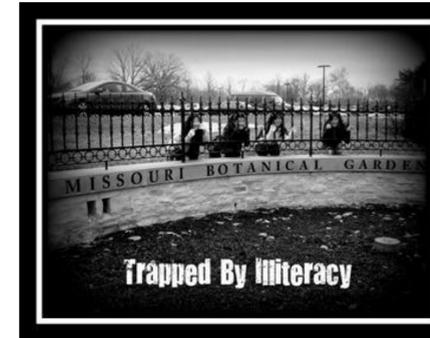


Results

Overall, students had a very positive response to Health Literacy Day. In many areas, students were able to identify the lessons they learned from the day and how they would apply these lessons in their interactions with patients both now and in the future.

The Health Literacy Day activities evoked many emotions, including but not limited to:

- Frustration
- Anxiety/stress
- Fear
- Annoyance
- Sense of accomplishment
- Confidence
- Joy



Graph 1: Student Responses to Health Literacy Day

Student Comments

- "I enjoyed the time I spent with my group, and I learned a lot about the St. Louis public transportation system. I can definitely correlate my experience today with what a patient may see during their time getting health services."
- "I had fun during the "Walking in the Patient's Shoes" activity. It was a little uncomfortable because I had never used the bus system before. It opened my eyes to seeing what many St. Louis citizens go through daily though."
- "It allowed us to see what some patients have to go through just to get to the doctor's office or pharmacy. I will appreciate the effort involved to get medical care more."
- "I have a lot more compassion and empathy for future patients who need to travel a certain distance without a car. Although public transportation is relatively simple, it can sometimes be confusing and overwhelming."
- "In the same way that we had to navigate the public transit system- a system we know little about- patients have to navigate a health care system that can be just as confusing. It really gave me a perspective to carry over into my pharmacy practice."



Implications

A scavenger hunt that requires students (or other health care professionals) to navigate a system that they are not familiar with (such as public transit) can help them gain understanding of what it is like for a patient with low health literacy to navigate a health system.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Health Literacy Missouri, Metro and members of the Health Literacy Grant team whose contributions made the STLCOP Health Literacy Day such a wonderful success.