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Using i-Health to Increase Health Literacy of College Students

Background

Presenting health information that is easy to read and understand, meaningful to the audience and reasonable to implement into action can pose a dilemma, especially when presented to a diverse and multicultural audience. We studied a group of students at Virginia Tech who took an on-line health class and assessed the imput of the textbook and the importance of the information to the students.

Purpose

One of the purposes of the study was to determine if presenting health content in an interactive on-line text was an effective method of increasing the health literacy of students.

Sample

Six hundred and fifty-five (n=655) students enrolled in the Personal Health class and six hundred and nine (n=609) participated in the on-line survey.

Measures

Fourteen items were asked that focused on (1) cultural and subject relevance and (2) degree of interest in learning course content.

Measures continued

Personal health implications and whether or not the material presented was thought-provoking and moved students to action.

Cultural and Subject Relevance

The following seven questions focused on cultural and subject relevance

1. I find the course textbook easy to read and understand
2. Based on what I have learned in this course, I believe that I am capable of making informed health decisions
3. I believe that I will be able to apply the course content to my own or someone else's personal health choices and behaviors
4. I find the textbook inclusive of my culture (consider such things as ethnicity, gender, and any other cultural group membership)
5. The course content material has impacted the way I think about my own health
6. This course has made me more aware of my own personal health and behaviors that impact my health
7. My experience with the course content material makes me want to learn more about health issues

Students responded to each question on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3= somewhat disagree; 4 = neutral; 5 = somewhat agree; 6 = agree; 7 = strongly agree, we asked the following questions with corresponding responses

Degree of Interest in Learning Course Content

How interested were you in learning the content material in each of the following chapters?

1. Foundations of Personal Health
2. Chose a Healthy Diet
3. Develop a Fitness Program
4. Understanding Drugs Use , Misuse, and Abuse
5. Respect Sexuality
6. Manage Stress
7. Mental Health and Disorders

Students responded to each question on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 = very uninterested; 2 = uninterested; 3 = somewhat uninterested; 4 = neutral; 5 = somewhat interested; 6 = interested; 7 = very interested, we asked the following

Results

Gender:
Females (n=303)
Males (n=306)

Ethnicity/Race:
White (n=466)
African American (n=30)
Asian or Pacifica Islander (n=73)
Hispanic (n=17)
Native American (n=2)
Other (n=21)

Class:
Freshman (n=33)
Sophomores (n=109)
Junior (n=187)
Senor (n=280)

Cultural and Subject Relevance

Statement	Mean Score 1=Strongly Disagree 7=Strongly Agree
I find the course textbook easy to read and understand)	5.82 (n=609
Based on what I have learned in this course, I believe that I am capable of making informed health decisions	6.13 (n=609)
I believe I will be able to apply the course content to my own or someone else's personal health choices and behaviors	6.15 (n=609)
I find the textbook inclusive of my culture	5.79 (n=609)
The course content has impacted the way I think about my own health	5.59 (n=609)
This course has made me more aware of my own personal health and behaviors that impact my health	5.74 (n=609)
My experience with the course material makes me want to learn more about health issues	5.59 (n=609)

Degree of Interest in Learning Course Content

Question: How interested were you in learning the course content in each of the following chapters?	Mean Score 1=very uninterested 7=very interested
Foundations of Personal Health	5.22 (n=609)
Chose a Healthy Diet	5.92 (n=609)
Develop a Fitness Program	5.93 (n=609)
Understanding Drug Use, Misuse and Abuse	5.55 (n=609)
Respect Sexuality	5.61 (n=609)
Manage Stress	5.88 (n=609)
Mental health and Disorders	5.52 (n=609)

Conclusions

1. i-Health appears to be an effective learning system to increase health literacy of undergraduate students
2. i-Health appears to be an effective learning system to affect the way undergraduate students think about their own health.