

Health Literacy Intensive Course for Pre-Doctoral Dental Students

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Background of Project

In an effort to enhance the content and application of the health literacy curriculum in pre-doctoral dental education at TUSDM, the Health Literacy Intensive was developed, a year-long health literacy curriculum for first- and second-year pre-doctoral dental students.

Health literacy encompasses many facets of health status and healthcare delivery, including individual (such as the patient, provider, caregiver, etc.) and systems factors. Health literacy education targeted towards health professionals-in-training is crucial for the development of a competent, well-rounded oral healthcare workforce.

Evaluation of the pre-doctoral health literacy curriculum at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine (TUSDM) revealed the limitations and insufficiencies in the didactic nature in which future oral healthcare providers are taught. Ideally, the training of future dental providers must reflect the dynamic nature of health literacy across multiple levels.

Goals and Objectives

- To understand the role of health literacy in relation to oral health and the healthcare system
- To appreciate the intersection of language, culture, and literacy
- To understand the value of effective communication with diverse populations in oral health education and practice

Monthly Thematic Topics

Months 1 & 2	History of health literacy and scope of the field: Strengths and limitations
Month 3	Plain Language and Numeracy
Month 4	Oral Health Promotion and Consumer Oral Health
Month 5	Literacy and Culture: CLAS Standards
Months 6	Adult Education and Health Literacy
Month 7	Use of Interpreters in the Clinical Setting

Course Assignment Samples

Assignment: Tracking Oral Health Messages



Date	Medium (e.g., TV, Web, Radio, Print, etc.)	Intended Audience	Who is delivering the message?	Tone	Oral Health Topic	Brief Evaluation: What worked? What didn't? Why? (Responses should be based on the use of health literacy principles)
12/15/15	TV PSA & Online video; Ad Council; Partnership for healthy mouths, healthy lives	Parents w/ young children	Parent-child Actors + Voice Narration	Humorous	Pediatric home care (2x2min)	What worked: The strong points of the advertisements was that it was short, humorous, and exemplified how a parent can engage with the child during tooth brushing. What didn't work: There was a gap between the connection of bike riding and brushing teeth.

Figure 1A & 1B. Initial Draft of Tracking Oral Health Messages: Students discover oral health related advertisements in the media and critically evaluate the effectiveness of the message being presented.

Assignment: Consumer Oral Health Material Development



DO YOU HAVE DRY MOUTH?
Common Drugs That Cause Dry Mouth:
• Antidepressants
• Antipsychotics
• Antibiotics
• Antihistamines
• Sedatives
• Antidiarrheals
• Beta-Blockers
• High blood pressure medications
• Pain medications
• Cold/flu medications

Is your medication causing your dry mouth?
A brief explanation on what may be causing your dry mouth (Xerostomia) and how it can be treated.

MEDICATION-INDUCED DRY MOUTH
Xerostomia—the technical term for the sensation of dryness in the mouth caused by decreased saliva production. The saliva remaining in the mouth is left thickened and viscous.
Why is saliva important for my oral health?
• Lubricates ingested food
• Makes dry food digestible
• Initiates starch digestion
• Fights bacterial threats in the mouth
• Protects against degradation of tooth structure
How is saliva produced? Saliva is produced by thousands of salivary glands in the mouth. The sublingual, submandibular, and parotid glands are the glands that produce the most saliva. The amount of saliva produced is determined by the parasympathetic feedback to the brain.
75% the amount of saliva normally produced in the mouth everyday is decreased in those with dry mouth.
Drugs Causing Dry Mouth:
• Antipsychotics
• Antidepressants
• Antihistamines
• Sedatives
• Hypnotics
• Antidiarrheals
• Anticoagulants
• Muscle relaxants

Figure 2. Initial Drafts of Consumer Oral Health Materials: Student create fact sheets and brochures to practice the development and content review of chairside and community educational material.

Assignment: Plain Language Thesaurus

Plain Language Thesaurus for Oral Health Professionals
Due: 4/25/16

- Please contribute at least 5 oral health-related words to the thesaurus. (No repeats! - If the word has already been defined by your classmate, please choose another word.)
- This is a living document. Please alphabetize all entries.
- Place your name in brackets next to each of your words.
- Cite sources, if necessary.

- Bacteria:** small organisms that live inside the body and the mouth. These organisms can be harmless or can cause tooth decay. [C. Johnston]
- Cast:** a stone model of teeth [C. Johnston]
- Candidiasis (thrush):** a fungal infection in your mouth that causes white patches on your tongue [A. Vu]
- Fordyce spots:** small yellow harmless bumps that are usually found on the inside of your cheeks. They are made of sebaceous glands, which are bumps that secrete oil in the skin. [A. Vu]
- Indication:** a reason to use a certain treatment [M. Myung]
- Rubber Dam:** a thin rectangular sheet of latex rubber used to protect a patient during a dental procedure. [D. Somoza]
- Topical:** gel applied directly on the skin such as gum and palate [M. Myung]

Figure 3. Initial Draft of Plain Language Thesaurus: Students contribute to the development of a plain language thesaurus to be shared with the TUSDM community.

Assessment

- Survey measuring change in knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported confidence of health literacy and related skills in course participants compared to first- and second-year predoctoral students in traditional dental curriculum.
- Peer assessment of course assignments
- End-of-year student qualitative evaluation of Health Literacy Intensive.

Implications for Practice

As TUSDM strives to become a health literate organization, the integration of the Health Literacy Intensive course will facilitate an ongoing, systematic implementation of the best health literacy practices at the organizational level. This intensive goes beyond the traditional national curriculum of dental students. By the time students enter clinic, they will have enhanced communication skills, a broader understanding of the healthcare system, and comprehend the implications of health literacy on oral health. Once students graduate, they will be able to identify health literacy concerns in their practice and work to achieve holistic dental care.

Acknowledgements

The 2015-2016 TUSDM Health Literacy Intensive is fully supported by a Tufts Innovates! grant. The grant team is grateful to the Asian American Civic Association for its continued partnership with TUSDM. Additionally, the faculty are grateful to the TUSDM administrative leadership and the HLI students who continue to go above and beyond the standard dental curriculum and further health literacy efforts in dentistry.