Introducing Health Literacy Basics to Nursing Students
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Introduction

With over 2.5 million registered nurses working in U.S. healthcare settings, nurses are often in the best position to assist the 90 million Americans with low health literacy levels (Sand-Jecklin, 2010; Mahadevan, 2013). Many nurses have not been educated about health literacy, and there are no standards for including health literacy in a nursing curriculum, yet studies have shown that even a brief introduction of health literacy to nursing students can be effective (Sand-Jecklin, 2010). This poster describes one example of a class session that engaged new nursing students in a conversation about the concept of health literacy.

Target Population: Sophomore Nursing Students in a Bachelor of Science, Nursing Program in the Midwest

Educational Format: As Smith and Zohar (2011) suggested, a variety of strategies were used to introduce the concept of health literacy. The 60 minute session included a PowerPoint lecture, active learning elements, and videos to teach health literacy basics. The nursing process provided a framework for the lesson.

Objectives: Diagnose, recognize barriers to high health literacy, and list potential outcomes of low health literacy levels. After viewing the AMA Health Literacy Video - Short Version (2012), students discussed the possible barriers and outcomes listed below. They were presented with possible NANDA Nursing Diagnoses that may fit with low literacy levels.

Assess

Assess your own health literacy level and your client’s. After being administered the Newest Vital Sign, students discussed 3 aspects of health literacy that this test addressed: words, numbers, and forms (Pfizer, 2011). Other formal assessment tools were mentioned. Health literacy was defined and explained.

Students worked in pairs, discussing how they informally assessed health literacy levels during their previous health history gathering assignment. Below is a list of students’ responses, reflecting the observations they believed may indicate health literacy levels:

- “Didn’t know their meds”, “couldn’t remember their surgeries and hospitalizations”, “their pronunciation of words”, “lack of eye contact”, “how they described their symptoms”, “pronunciations of diagnoses”, “level of education”, “hearing deficit”, “no car”, “not vaccinated”, “visual deficit”, “didn’t understand the words I used”, “no annual checkup”

Diagnose

Diagnose, recognize barriers to high health literacy, and list potential outcomes of low health literacy levels. After viewing the AMA Health Literacy Video - Short Version (2012), students discussed the possible barriers and outcomes listed below. They were presented with possible NANDA Nursing Diagnoses that may fit with low literacy levels.

Plan & Implement

Plan and implement appropriate client education, adhering to universal health literacy precautions. After being given the Health Literacy Fact Sheets to use as a guide, students worked in pairs to evaluate this printed educational client handout, listing strengths and weaknesses (Mahadevan, 2013). They considered how they might verbally communicate the information to clients using universal health literacy precautions. Other best practices for use of pictures, videos, and additional teaching methods were discussed.

Outcomes

Faculty peer-evaluation of session: “gave examples to heighten learning”, “students actively engaged”, “encouraged quality discussion”, “well developed with interactive component”, “dynamic presentation which allows for student questions and sharing”

Students’ end of semester poster presentations for assisted living clients adhered to universal health literacy precautions, with appropriate content & visuals.

References


