



MISSING INGREDIENT: SPANISH-SPEAKING HISPANICS FROM THE HEALTH LITERACY STUDIES

Bertha E. Flores, RN, MSN,
&
Gayle Acton, PhD, RN.

BACKGROUND

- 90 million people in the U.S. lack basic literacy skills.
- Literacy skills are a prerequisite to health literacy.
- Low literacy leads to low health literacy.
- Low health literacy negatively impact health and health behavior.



HEALTH LITERACY

○ Definition:

- It is a wide range of skill needed to obtain, comprehend and evaluate health information.
 - It is multi-dimensional
 - Evolves over a life time
 - Individual factors
 - Culture
 - Ethnicity
 - Education
 - Socio-economic
 - Political
 - Language

(Ratzan & Parker, 2000; Nielsen-Bohlman et al., 2004; Zarcadoolas et al., 2005)



INADEQUATE HEALTH LITERACY

- Predominately found among
 - Older adults
 - Functional health literacy declines with age
 - Nonwhite
 - Mexican ethnicity
 - Lower income
 - Lower educational attainment
 - Spanish language



LOW HEALTH LITERACY AND HEALTH OUTCOMES

- Low health literacy is associated with poor health outcomes.
 - Up to 3 times worse health outcomes.
 - Poor health.
 - Decrease use of preventive health services.
 - Worse physical function.
 - Worse mental health.
 - More difficulty with activities of daily living.
 - More hospital admissions.
 - Higher emergency room visits and costs.
 - Higher mortality



IMPROVING HEALTH LITERACY

- Best approach to improving health outcomes.
 - In particularly among the elderly (Cho et al., 2008).
 - Ethnic minorities.



HISPANICS IN THE U.S.

- 50.5 Million Hispanics live in the U.S.
 - Mexicans are the largest group.
- NAAL(2003) Report
 - (44%) of Hispanics scored *Below Basic* vs. (7%)Whites
- Spanish-speaking Hispanics score lower on health literacy tests.
- 17% of English-speaking Hispanics score inadequate and 10% score marginal on health literacy tests.
- 79% of Hispanics have less than 8th grade education.



LITERATURE REVIEW

- Purpose: Review the relationship between health literacy and Hispanics.
- Database
 - CINAHL Plus with full text, Ovid, Medline, Pub Med and ERIC
- 1996-2010
- Search terms:
 - Health literacy
 - Literacy
 - Hispanic+



STUDY SELECTION

- 80 Articles were reviewed.
 - 30 Met inclusion criteria.
 - Both qualitative and quantitative.
 - Written in English
 - Conducted in the U.S.



LIMITATIONS

- Data base search.
- Articles not written in English.
- Articles not conducted in the U.S.



RESULTS

- Few studies 2% (6/30) were conducted in English and Spanish.
- 33% (9/30) same data set.
 - Described
 - Non-Hispanic white (76%)
 - Hispanic (11%)
 - Female (57.4%)
 - High School diploma (33.6%)



RESULTS

- Different measurements of health literacy used.
 - Standardized and validated tests (Davis et al., 1993; Parker et al., 1995)
 - The Test for Functional Literacy in Adults (TOFHLA), (3/30, 10%).
 - The Short version of the Test for Functional Health Literacy (S-TOFHLA), (17/30, 56%).
 - The Rapid Test of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM), (17/30, 17%)
 - others did not.



CONCLUSIONS

- Spanish is the second language most used in the U.S.
 - It is an important and strong component of Hispanic culture. (National Alliance for Hispanic Care, 2001; Pew Hispanic Center, 2008)
- A large gap in the health literacy research exists.
- Little is known about the health literacy needs of Spanish-speaking Hispanics living in the U.S.



IMPLICATIONS

- Nursing:
 - Assess health literacy.
 - Provide cultural and linguistic appropriate care.
- Research:
 - Need to be inclusive of all populations.
 - Hispanic subgroups.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TEXAS
AT AUSTIN

WHAT STARTS HERE CHANGES THE WORLD

HGNI
Hartford Geriatric
Nursing Initiative

THANK YOU



WE MAKE LIVES BETTER

UT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER[®]

SAN ANTONIO