

Health & Literacy:

Constructing Curriculum for Health Care Providers

A LEARNING INSTITUTE

October 16-18, 2008
Calgary, AB



Studies released in the past year in both Canada and the U.S. conclude that 60% and more of adults in both countries “lack the capacity to obtain, understand, and act upon health information and services and to make appropriate health decisions on their own.” These conclusions are based on analyses of subsets of data from the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS in Canada, ALLS in the U.S.) that asked respondents to answer questions on health-related tasks. These included tasks on health promotion, protection, disease prevention, health-care management, and systems navigation. The results suggest that levels of health literacy are even lower than levels of general literacy.

What should be done? And who should do it?

A shift in understanding about health literacy began with the 2004 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report that stated:

...health literacy goes beyond the individual. It also depends upon the skills, preferences, and expectations of those health information providers: our doctors, nurses, administrators, home health workers, the media, and many others. Health literacy arises from a convergence of education, health services, and social and cultural factors, and brings together research and practice from diverse fields.

The IOM report broadened the focus beyond individuals who lack skills to the forces that shape the individuals and the systems and providers who serve them. Since then, numerous studies and reports have called for integration of health literacy into professional curricula and continuing education for health-care providers at all levels.

Some institutions have developed courses or programs in health literacy, although they are still a minority. However, when a question about curriculum was posted late last year on the National Institute for Literacy health literacy listserv, the replies revealed a wide variety of content and focus in courses with similar titles, and many more questions than answers.

What does a health literacy curriculum look like? Is it only a course in plain writing, clear communication, multi-media communication, cross-cultural communication, understanding patients with low literacy, accommodating different learning styles, connecting to safety and risk, learning a few easy tips?

In England, if you ask about health literacy, you are introduced to Skills for Life and Health, an initiative of the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector “to improve public health and patient care by developing the Literacy, Language and Numeracy (LLN) skills and practices of individuals and organizations within the health sector.”

It addresses workers with the lowest literacy levels. Elaborate curriculum has been developed to support this program, an entirely different approach to health literacy from anything seen in Canada or the U.S..

Yet in Canada, people with the lowest levels of literacy are concentrated in a few industries, including health-care and social assistance. A total of 140,000 individuals at Level 1 and 409,000 at Level 2 were employed in those sectors in 2003. This is also true for the U.S.

In Canada and the U.S., we have generally concentrated on health-care professionals, but do we agree on what should be taught to whom? What should physicians learn about health literacy? What training should they receive? What about primary care nurses? Public health nurses? Pharmacists? Radio technicians? Aides? Social workers? Others? How should foreign-born providers be trained? Should health literacy curriculum be limited to health-care providers?

This Institute will invite health-care providers from every branch of health-care service, curriculum developers in health-care and adult basic education and literacy, ESL providers, administrators, policy makers and anyone with an interest or expertise. You will share promising practices, models, consider the challenges and propose new directions for grounded curriculum in health literacy for health-care providers.

RESIDENT EXPERT



Andrew Pleasant, Ph.D

We have invited Andrew Pleasant, Ph.D., to spend the three days with us as resident expert. Andrew is widely known for his practice and research in the areas of health literacy, science, health, and environmental communication, and social marketing. He has led and participated in numerous training sessions in the United States and internationally.

He is currently an assistant professor at Rutgers University in the Department of Human Ecology and the Extension Department of Family and Community Health Sciences. He is co-author of *Advancing Health Literacy: A Framework for Understanding and Action* (2006). Andrew recently collected all the curriculum information and materials that people were willing to share on the NIFL listserv at <http://www.advancinghealthliteracy.com/curricula.html>

Andrew's course websites are:
<http://aesop.rutgers.edu/~healthlit>
<http://aesop.rutgers.edu/~cils>
<http://aesop.rutgers.edu/~envhealth>

KEY QUESTIONS

- Who is creating health literacy curriculum and for whom?
- Who in the health-care sector needs health literacy curriculum?
- Should health literacy curriculum have a common core for all in the health-care sector?
- Where is the space for health literacy in professional curriculum?
- Should special attention be paid to health-care workers with low literacy?
- What and how can health professionals and post-secondary health studies students learn from adult literacy providers?
- Is current health literacy curriculum too focused on text-based health information and too little on clear communication?
- Where are promising practices of teaching and learning that incorporate cultural diversity, adult literacy and health?

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REFUND POLICY: Until October 1, we will give a full refund, minus a 15% administrative fee. After October 1, refunds will be issued only if you provide valid documentation, e.g. medical certificate.



**The Centre
for Literacy**

Mail or fax completed form to
The Centre for Literacy at the address
at the bottom of this brochure.

INSTITUTE FORMAT

The Institute is a collaborative event with a limited registration. Participants meet together for three days from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. After hours, there are optional sessions with demonstrations or small group discussions for those who want to explore a specific issue or study a model in greater depth.

If you register, you may become a presenter. With a program built around participants' experience and expertise, the Institute offers an opportunity to share and create knowledge. Participants will present, question and reflect on current policies and practices in creating and teaching curricula on health literacy in Canada, the U.S., the UK, and selected other countries.

To start the conversation, we will send registrants a few short documents three weeks before the Institute, including summaries from recent studies on Health Literacy in Canada, the U.S. and abroad. We ask each registrant to identify their issues and questions on a one-page Participant Profile. These are compiled and shared, so we can begin the meeting with a common focus.

If you prefer to listen but not present, we still invite you to identify topics or themes from your own experiences. Time is set aside each day to discuss and reflect on these and to get feedback from colleagues. You will leave with new understanding of the issues, access to new resources, and ideas for collaborations in your own milieu.

You can share information on free tables and use screens for poster displays.

SCHEDULE

Thursday – Saturday, October 16-18, 2008: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

After 3:00 p.m. daily: Optional demonstrations, discussions, and networking opportunities. Daily schedule will be finalized two weeks before the Institute.

FEE

Includes materials, continental breakfasts, lunches and refreshments

Early-bird registration (until August 31, 2008)\$495 CDN
After August 31, 2008\$550 CDN

All amounts are in Canadian dollars.

SUBSIDY

Bow Valley College has made funding available for 10 subsidies of \$500 to support individuals from non-profit community-based organizations or post-secondary students in relevant health-care programs to attend. For criteria and application instructions, please see the web site at www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca, under the Health Literacy Institute button.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Arrangements have been made at the conference site, the Delta Bow Valley Hotel in downtown Calgary. The hotel is offering a special rate of \$159/single or \$179/double occupancy. They will hold the block of rooms until Tuesday, September 16, 2008. After that, reservations and the group rate will be based on availability.

For reservations, contact the hotel directly:

Delta Bow Valley Hotel
209 - 4th Avenue Southeast,
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2G OC6
Tel.: (403) 266-1980 or 1-877-814-7706
Quote: Bow Valley College Institute
Group code: GKBVC1

The Centre for Literacy is a charitable non-profit research, training and resource centre. Through publications and action-research projects, it bridges theory and practice to build capacity for improved adult basic skills provision in schools, communities and workplaces. It also works to inform policy development. As a Learning Forum it provides opportunities for practitioners, researchers and policy-makers from across Canada and abroad to meet and exchange as peers. The Centre has been a leader in health literacy since 1995.

www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca

Bow Valley College is a learner-centered organization that provides programs and services that are accessible, affordable and always evolving to meet the needs of adult learners and community. With the Centre for Quality Caregiving and its community-based adult literacy projects, BVC continually develops and builds upon innovative curriculum design and delivery and applied research, particularly in health and adult literacy.

www.bowvalleycollege.ca

The Health and Learning Knowledge Centre (HLKC)

– one of five centres of expertise established by CCL – serves as a national network linking expertise about the vital connections between the learning and health of Canadians. Led by the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria, the HLKC is comprised of a 17 member consortium and a national advisory committee with more than 30 members from Canada's health and learning communities. CCL is an independent, not-for-profit corporation funded through an agreement with Human Resources and Social Development Canada. Its mandate is to promote and support evidence-based decisions about learning throughout all stages of life, from early childhood through to the senior years.

www.ccl-cca.ca

A vision of a health-literate country

All people...have the capacity, opportunities and support they need to obtain and use health information effectively, to act as informed partners in the care of themselves, their families and communities, and to manage interactions in a variety of settings that health and well-being.

Adapted from *A Vision for a Health Literate Canada*, Report of the Expert Panel on Health Literacy, Canadian Public Health Association, 2008.

The Centre for Literacy



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The Centre for Literacy acknowledges the support of the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), Human Resources and Social Development Canada, and Dawson College, Montreal. The Centre is a registered charity.

Visit us on the web at: www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca