



The New York City Health Literacy Fellowship



2006 Program Brochure
www.nyc.gov/healthliteracy

Health Literacy is the ability of individuals to read, to understand, and to act upon health-related information. It also refers to the capacity of professionals and institutions to communicate effectively so that community members can make informed decisions and take appropriate actions to protect and promote their health.



The Health Literacy Fellowship

is sponsored by the Mayor's Office of Adult Education for a limited number of highly qualified and dedicated first year medical students in New York City.

Participating students strengthen their health literacy skills through an immersion experience in adult learning as it applies to health. Fellows receive training in adult learning methods and teaching strategies and are matched with selected organizations sponsoring adult literacy and/or English language classes.

Fellows work as teaching assistants and implement health literacy projects involving adult learners. In addition, fellows carry out a summer research project to advance the current state of knowledge related to health literacy. The fellowship fosters partnerships between the health care, government, education, and public health sectors.

The 2006 Health Literacy Fellows

Elena Trofimovsky is a student of the SUNY Downstate College of Medicine, class of 2009. She received a Bachelors degree in Chemistry and minored in Psychology at Brooklyn College. She has served in various positions on the board of AMSA, the American Medical Students Association, worked with the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health, and has designed and developed sex education workshops for high school students. During the summer of 2006, Elna was placed at Brooklyn BEGIN Adult Learning Center.

Linda Fan is a student of the Weill Cornell Medical College class of 2009. She received a Master of Science in Secondary Education from Mercy University and a Bachelors of Science in Geology and Biology from Brown University. She has taught fifth grade in New York City, volunteered with the Rockefeller University Hospital, and developed curricula for the Princeton Review. During the summer of 2006, Linda was placed at HANAC BEGIN Adult Learning Center.

Neel Khanna is a student of the SUNY Downstate College of Medicine, MD/MPH program, class of 2009. He received a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Brooklyn College. He has been a volunteer tutor at several New York High Schools, conducted clinical research on the synthesis of ionic liquids, and completed a clinical internship at Kingsbrook Hospital. During the summer of 2006, Neel was placed at the Mount Saint Vincent Institute for Immigrant Concern's Adult Learning Program.

Fellows' Thoughts

"I'm now fully aware of the impact that low literacy may have on healthcare and will carry this knowledge with me throughout my career. I intend to raise this problem at my college and find ways to address this problem from the health side of things."



"I believe that this experience will actually make me a much better doctor. After speaking to some students that struggled to get out a complete sentence, it made me more patient and a better listener. I learned that I given time, they could definitely be open with a healthcare worker."



"Great experience-although I was very much aware of everything I encountered and the implications thereof, this experience gave me an opportunity to practice hands-on, working with low literacy adults whose language I don't speak."



Fellow's Projects

Linda Fan

Using Project Based Learning to Improve Health Literacy, Abstract

The relationship is clear—low literacy and poor health outcomes are strongly linked. This report describes an effort to advance health literacy and thereby improve health outcomes in adult learners through a project-based learning curriculum. The students, men and women on public assistance who attended an education program two days a week, participated in a health survey project. Throughout the summer, they wrote, distributed, and analyzed a health survey; researched and created fact sheets for other students at the site; and narrated and edited personal stories. Students participating in the health survey project practiced and gained skills in all aspects of health literacy: functional literacy, scientific literacy, scientific literacy, and civic literacy. This study confirmed that experience-based learning projects are an excellent way to help adult learners increase their health literacy skills and makes recommendations for adult literacy programs interested in utilizing project-based learning to teach health literacy.

Neel Khanna

Field Notes

While working with a center for 5 weeks that provides English proficiency classes for an immigrant population, I conducted a series of interviews regarding health with some students and then designed lessons to target common problems that I saw. I heard a trend of a lack of a social network, sometimes accompanied by depression and general lack of access to medical care. Many felt that they could not afford medical care and some complained that they did not have a green card or insurance. I also encountered some that complained that they could not properly communicate with their doctors or healthcare workers in general. This led in some cases to confusion about medication. I, therefore, prepared lessons that centered on healthcare access for immigrants in New York City and facilitated group discussions on what to do if you can't understand and communicate with your doctor. The individual interviews made the students a lot more comfortable with me and the lessons were successful in getting the students interested and aware of opportunities that the city provides for them. In addition, I worked with higher level classes to brainstorm tips that they would provide for new immigrants in New York City regarding healthcare. I believe that the partnership allowed the students to become more proactive in their health care and they developed a degree of health confidence.

Elina Trofimovsky

Action Plan

Because limited English proficiency demanded a more slow-paced, tailored approach, the Literacy and Beginner ABE students were, over a period of five weeks, exposed to the first and third of the "10 Steps to a Longer and Healthier Life" in a series of classroom lessons. Working together with an English teacher, we covered the following topics: 1) body parts (using an activity sheet and the Rosetta Stone computer program); 2) food groups and the healthier choices thereof (using activity sheets, group work, and class discussion); 3) the doctor appointment scenario given a LEP patient (activity sheets, class discussion, writing and reading experience, fill-in-the-blank writing exercises, cross-word puzzles); 4) stroke survivor newspaper testimonial article (class discussion, journal writing on a personal health experience, which triggered many questions and was followed by a lesson on Internet-based searches of health topics using reputable, easy-to-read websites).

The Health Literacy Fellowship is a program of
the Mayor's Office of Adult Education:
www.nyc.gov/adulteducation

For More Information:
www.nyc.gov/healthliteracy

2007 Applications will be available Winter 2006.