

Culturally Competent Health Information Services

This is the title of the half-day workshop I attended at the 2007 MCMLA/MLA Annual Conference, here in Omaha. A description of the course, found on the Conference web site, reads: “This course focuses on meeting the health information/health literacy needs of refugee and immigrant populations, using a collaborative interdisciplinary model. The model can also be applied to low literacy ethnic groups...” Some of the topics included:

- o Barriers to health information literacy/health information needs of refugee, immigrant and low literacy populations
- o Standards for culturally and linguistically appropriate health care and education
- o Overview of resources for bilingual and low literacy populations – focus on communications media and audiovisual formats”...



Also from the MCMLA/MLA Conference web site – “Our instructor, Margaret (Peg) Allen, MLS-AHIP, is a library consultant based in Stratford, WI... She serves as coordinator for the Hmong Health Education Network, Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association <http://www.wausauhmong.org>.” We quickly saw her passion for the Hmong people and her need to share about the critical issues of health literacy for immigrant and underserved populations.

As health literacy is a passion of mine, the workshop was a clear reminder to me how critical it is for every citizen to be aware of our changing national demographics. We need to do whatever we can to support initiatives in our institutions, our communities and our nation to assure the best health care is available for EVERYONE!

As you might guess from the course description and the fact this was a half-day workshop, our time was “packed” with information. There were a series of important resources Peg reviewed for us throughout the morning, including these:

Hospitals, Language, and Culture Study, The Joint Commission; June, 2007
www.jointcommission.org/patientsafety/hlc/

The Health Literacy of America’s Adults: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy; U.S. Dept. of Education; September, 2006
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006483>

Mapping Census 2000: The Geography of Diversity
<http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/atlas.html>

Consumer Health Information in Many Languages <http://nmlm.gov/outreach/consumer/multi.html>
which is a collaboration of the NN/LM Consumer Outreach Librarians.

Conflicts Based On Health Beliefs – “Worlds Apart: A Four-Part Film Series on Cross-Cultural Healthcare” http://www.commonwealthfund.org/topics/topics_show.htm?doc_id=228596 (Film clips can be downloaded)

A Librarian at Every Table: Librarians and Community Initiatives <http://www.cas.usf.edu/lis/a-librarian-at-every-table/index.html>

A Librarian at the Kitchen Table <http://librarianoutreach.blogspot.com/>

Speaking of librarians participating in community initiatives -- I found myself challenged again to ask – What am I doing to make a difference in creating health literacy awareness for our community? Perhaps sharing some of what I discovered with you can make a difference. I also direct you to a series of links on the topic of **Health Literacy** we have created on our Library's web site http://www.methodistcollege.edu/Library_Detail.asp?PID=5&PCID=21
Health Literacy—An updated list of web resources can be found on our **Consumer Health Resources** web page for **John Moritz Library**; Nebraska Methodist College – the Josie Harper Campus.

I want to thank the ICON Executive Committee for approval of my scholarship request to attend this workshop. I look forward to sharing further through conversations and through future postings to our **Health Literacy** web pages.

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