

Assessment of E-health Literacy Among Health Education Students

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Introduction: Due to widespread health information seeking on the Internet across college campuses, researchers have begun to investigate e-health literacy levels of college students. Specifically, e-health literacy is an important area for health education undergraduate students, who are responsible for being able to make use of electronic sources of health information. To date, little research has been done to assess whether college students have adequate skills to search for, locate, and/or evaluate e-health information. **Purpose:** This presentation will highlight results from an investigation of perceived and actual e-health literacy among health education undergraduate majors at a large Southwestern university. **Methods:** A convenience sample of health education students completed the Research Readiness Self-Assessment – Health (RRSA-h) online survey instrument. Pearson product moment correlations were used to determine associations between perceived and actual e-health literacy. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine actual ability to obtain and evaluate e-health information according to student academic classification (e.g., sophomore, junior, senior). **Results:** Seventy-seven (n = 77) undergraduate students (88% female) reported actual mean e-health literacy test scores ranging from 39.3% to 50.4%. These low scores were markedly inferior to mean ratings of perceived e-health literacy, which ranged from 75.3% to 78.5%. Perceived and actual ability to evaluate e-health information was significantly correlated with one another ($r = 0.26$, $P = .045$); however, perceived and actual ability to obtain e-health information were not correlated. Students of advanced academic status (e.g., juniors and seniors), reported higher overall e-health literacy than their younger counterparts ($F(4,140) = 2.597$, $p = .039$). **Discussion:** Health education students appear to lack important e-health literacy skills, especially students with less academic experience. This deficiency is disconcerting, especially considering that 84% of the sample was either juniors or seniors (i.e., upper level students) who had mean GPAs over 3.0. **Conclusion:** The field of health education would benefit from including more coursework across professional preparatory degree programs to adequately prepare undergraduate students to use e-health resources. More practice-based curriculum applications should ensure that all health education undergraduate students (regardless of specialty area) are adequately prepared to use the Internet to obtain and evaluate health information.