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A Survey of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Knowledge among Health Educators in the United States

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Background: Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is popular among U.S. health care consumers, but no study has examined how much health educators know about CAM. Purpose: To examine the knowledge of basic CAM concepts and common CAM therapies among health educators in the U.S. Methods: An online survey was conducted among 1,299 health educators with valid e-mails on a professional listserv. The response rate was 39%. The 16-item CAM knowledge scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .71. Results: Participating health educators were most knowledgeable about chiropractic and massage therapy, familiar with the general definition of CAM, understood whether acupuncture is beneficial in treating a variety of health conditions, and whether there is sufficient scientific evidence regarding CAM safety and effectiveness. Participants were unclear about the difference between complementary medicine and alternative medicine. CAM knowledge appeared to be influenced by the participants' sex, education level, race/ethnicity, and employment setting. Discussion: Similar to other studies, participating health educators were more familiar with the concepts of commonly used CAM therapies than those of less widely practiced ones. Translation to Health Education Practice: CAM education should be implemented as part of a professional preparation curriculum and in the form of continuing education for health educators in the U.S.

Social-Cognitive Predictors of College Student Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine

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Background: Little research has addressed the prevalence and predictors of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use among undergraduate students. Purpose: The purpose of this study was to: (1) measure the prevalence and type of CAM use among a sample of college undergraduates, and (2) test the significance of select social-cognitive constructs and demographics as predictors of CAM use among a college population. Methods: A random sample of undergraduate students within the Texas A&M University system was solicited via e-mail to complete a web-based survey. Results: Findings show high rates of CAM use. Gender, attitude toward CAM, outcome expectancies regarding the health care encounter, and social network use of CAM were shown to be significant predictors of CAM use. Discussion: CAM use is popular among college students. Results from this study can inform health care and health education professionals interested in improving health care processes and addressing positive and negative issues related to CAM use. Translation to Health Education Practice: Health

educators should be prepared to present CAM as health care options and discuss benefits and risks associated with CAM therapies. Researchers should continue to explore the psychosocial determinants of CAM use as a guide for health education and intervention.

Effects of Disasters on Smoking and Relapse: An Exploratory Study of Hurricane Katrina Victims

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Background: Psychosocial stress maintains cigarette use and precipitates relapse, but little is known about how natural disasters in particular affect smoking. Purpose: To determine the feasibility of recruiting victims soon after a natural disaster for a survey study, and to assess the types and determinants of changes in smoking behavior resulting from exposure to the disaster. Methods: A convenience sample of 35 Hurricane Katrina refugees who had smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime were surveyed one month after the storm to evaluate changes in smoking behavior. Results: Among a small sample of former smokers, more than half relapsed after Katrina, citing stress, urge, and sadness. Among current smokers, 52% increased their smoking after Katrina by more than half a pack per day on average. Most individuals who increased their smoking or relapsed expressed interest in receiving cessation assistance within the next month. Discussion: Stress-related increases in smoking and relapse may be common after a natural disaster. Translation to Health Education Practice: Health education professionals have an important role to play in responding to changes in tobacco use in the aftermath of disasters. Educational interventions to discourage tobacco use as a coping strategy may be especially warranted given the high level of interest expressed in smoking cessation.

Reproductive Health Education and Services Needs of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees Following Disaster

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Background: Following the occurrence of natural or manmade disaster, relief worker priorities include providing water, food, shelter, and immunizations for displaced persons. Like these essential initiatives, reproductive health education and services must also be incorporated into recovery efforts. Purpose: This study examined reproductive health care indicators, including the key areas of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infection (STI) transmission, family planning and pregnancy-related health services, and selected reproductive health education knowledge among refugees and internally displaced persons residing in southern Belize following Hurricane Mitch's assault on the region in 1998. In addition, the occurrence of gender-based violence was measured. Methods: Internally displaced persons and refugee men and women were interviewed about prenatal care and delivery services, family planning knowledge and utilization, HIV/AIDS and other STI transmission knowledge, and sexual violence. Results: Numerous misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and other STIs existed. Most persons had never used any family planning method. Oral contraceptive use declined as

length of stay at refugee camps increased. Most women were able to access prenatal services. Violence against women, including sexual violence, was reported. Discussion: Better access to medical services and education about reproductive health issues are needed following disasters. Translation to Health Education Practice: Health educators can contribute to relief efforts. Moreover, other relief workers should be equipped with skills and knowledge to help meet the reproductive health needs of disaster victims.

The Digital Divide in Health Education: Myth or Reality?

Michael Stellefson, Beth Chaney, and Don Chaney

Although e-health interventions provide new opportunities for health education, there has been cause for concern regarding the purported information technology gap between those who have access to digital applications and those who do not—termed the “digital divide.” The literature suggests, however, that this divide may now be illusory, driven primarily by a myriad of societal divides such as income, education, and literacy inequities. Such disparities may be the true propagators of what is now becoming a mythical digital divide. The purpose of this article is to identify the evolutionary nature of the digital divide and speculate as to how and why it has become a mirage in today’s increasingly technological world. Based on this discussion, suggestions are made regarding how health educators can enable the use of technology to better health through the study of consumer health informatics and e-health behavioral support.

Integrating Math and Nutrition Education: Teaching with the FDA Food Label

Bill Hyman

Overweight youths pose a public health crisis, and nutrition education is critical to addressing this problem. These activities utilize the FDA food label to integrate math and nutrition education for teaching youths how to make better food choices. Objectives: Students will locate nutrition information on the standard food label, compare that information to the Institute of Medicine’s Dietary Reference Intakes, and use mathematical skills to evaluate that information. Target Audience: Students in middle and high school.

The Basics of Health and Wellness

Michele L. Pettit and Kimberly L. Peabody

This teaching idea presents discussion points and activities regarding health, wellness, and related concepts. Objectives: The suggested methods and materials challenge students to differentiate between health and wellness, describe a healthy person through a creative drawing, and identify and explain external influences on health and wellness using a collage. Target Audience: Middle school students enrolled in personal health courses.

Death by Design: A Personal Introspection

Pamela Hoalt and Kenneth Hoalt

Objectives: Comprehending the impact of high-risk behaviors leading to premature death and analyzing high-risk behavior in the physical dimension of health in order to reduce personal risk. Students will state how personal perspectives of life and death influence decisions to engage in high-risk behavior and communicate behavior changes needed in the social, intellectual, and emotional dimensions of health to achieve life goals. Target Audience: Health students in grades 9-12.