

May/June 2010

Changing Health Behavior in Youth

Godfrey M. Hochbaum

This paper is reformatted and reprinted as part of the 40th anniversary of the *American Journal of Health Education* (formerly *School Health Review*) *Health Education - Our Heritage* series. The original paper appeared in Volume 1 (September 1969, pp. 15-19). At that time, Godfrey M. Hochbaum was deputy director, Social Analysis and Evaluation Program, National Center for Health Services Research and Development, Health Services and Mental Administration, U. S. Public Health Services, Washington, D.C.

Impact of Poison Prevention Education on the Knowledge and Behaviors of Seniors

Paul R. Jones, Monique A. Sheppard, Cecelia B. Snowden, Ted R. Miller, Valerie S. Nelkin, Denise D. Nguyen, Ivy Tominack, and Hallie Chillag Dunlap

Background: Unintentional poisoning is an important public health issue that exacts a heavy toll on our nation's seniors. However, relatively few empirical studies have examined the efficacy of poison prevention education programs on this cohort. **Purpose:** This study assessed the impact of a poison education program on the knowledge, perceptions, intentions, and behaviors of seniors in Missouri and West Virginia. **Methods:** One-hundred and twenty-seven seniors completed pre-and post-test surveys, which were designed to assess the program's efficacy. Participants were re-interviewed after four weeks to determine whether they had implemented the behaviors described in the program. **Results:** The results revealed that the program improved the knowledge of participants and impacted both their behavioral intentions and actual behaviors. **Discussion:** When taken together, these data indicate that brief educational interventions may be an effective tool in reducing the incidence of unintentional poisonings among seniors. **Translation to Health Education Practice:** More generally, these methods and findings suggest that single sessions of theory-driven health education can be effective for interventions among seniors.

Teaching Health Literacy Using Popular Television Programming: A Qualitative Pilot Study

Brian A. Primack, Dustin J. Wickett, Kevin L. Kraemer, and Susan Zickmund

Background: Teaching of health and medical concepts in the K-12 curriculum may help improve health literacy. **Purpose:** The purpose of this project was to determine acceptability and preliminary efficacy of pilot implementation of a health literacy curriculum using brief clips from a popular television program. **Methods:** Participants included 55 ninth-grade students in a low-income school with a high proportion of minority students. The curriculum used three brief interspersed segments from the television show ER to teach basic topics in cardiology. After the 30-minute experimental curriculum, students completed open-ended surveys which were coded qualitatively. **Results:** The most common codes described "enjoyment" (N=28), "acquisition of new knowledge" (N=28), "informative" (N=15), "interesting" (N=12), and "TV/video" (N=10). We found on average 2.9 examples of medical content per participant. Of the 26 spontaneously-generated verifiable statements, 24 (92.3%) were judged as accurate by two independent coders ($\kappa=0.70$, $P=.0002$). **Discussion:** Use of brief segments of video material contributed to the

acceptability of health education curricula without detracting from students' acquisition of accurate information. Translation to Health Education Practice: Health education practitioners may wish to include brief clips from popular programming to motivate students and provide context for health-related lessons.

The Impact of Professional Development to Infuse Health and Reading in Elementary Schools

Tami Benham Deal, Jayne M. Jenkins, Laurence O. Deal, and Adelle Byra

Background: Elementary classroom teachers must overcome a number of instructional barriers, including time constraints and professional preparation, if they are to deliver effective health education and enhance health literacy among youth. Purpose: This study examined the direct impact of a long-term professional development program on integrating health education and literacy instruction on third-grade teachers' confidence and practice and its indirect effect on student learning. Methods: Data on confidence and implementation of instructional and assessment practices were collected from 16 teachers. Students (n=99) from their classrooms and from four comparison classrooms (n=101) completed pre- and post-program constructed response assessment. Results: Significant increases were seen in teachers' confidence in describing health education standards, determining if students achieved the standards and using rubrics to guide scoring practices. Children's books were used to integrate instruction and most teachers increased the time spent on integration activities. Students in their classrooms scored significantly higher than students in comparison classrooms on health knowledge and skills. Discussion: These results confirm our belief that by increasing awareness and understanding of standards-based health education and assessment, and by showing teachers how they can use children's books as the context for teaching and reinforcing health concepts and skills outlined in the standards, their confidence about teaching health can increase. Translation to Health Education Practice: Integrating health and language arts instruction may be the key to overcoming some of the factors teachers report as barriers to teaching health education.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine: Attitudes and Use among Health Educators in the United States

Ping Johnson, Jennifer Priestley, Kandice Johnson Porter, and Jane Petrillo

Background: Interest in and use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in the United States is increasing. However, CAM remains an area of nascency for researchers and western practitioners. Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine U.S. health educators' attitudes toward CAM and their use of common CAM therapies. Methods: A cross-sectional online survey was conducted among members of a professional health educator listserv. Results: Health educators generally have positive attitudes toward CAM and about 90% have used at least one CAM therapy in the last 12 months. Differences in CAM attitudes and use were significant, with females reporting more positive attitudes toward and use of CAM. Discussion: Health educators' overall positive attitudes toward CAM are consistent with the limited extant literature. However, important differences were found by various demographic characteristics, not previously identified. Translation to Health Education Practice: The results of this study support the small, but growing, body of literature regarding the need for CAM education for future health

education professionals. A discussion of various approaches to the integration of CAM education into professional preparation programs is included.

Drug Testing in Schools: A Brief Review and Analysis of Recent Events

James Velasquez

Random drug testing (RSDT) in schools is a controversial topic. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that RSDT is constitutional for certain groups of students. Moreover, funding has been made available for schools to implement RSDT programs through the U.S. Department of Education and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. This review provides a comprehensive review of the literature, as well as a summary of recent RSDT events in U.S. public schools. Empirical data that examine RSDT's effectiveness for reducing student drug use is also reported. The implementation of statewide RSDT programs is on the rise, as well as continued support, funding and advocacy through various government channels. Little empirical research examining the effectiveness of RSDT to reduce student drug use has been completed although the largest evaluation of RSDT programs to date is presently underway. RSDT in schools is a polarizing topic, and has been politicized. It is important for school health educators to understand this issue because they play an important role in student drug use prevention and should be involved in discussions of RSDT implementation.

Strategies for Playground Injury Prevention: An Overview of a Playground Project

Heather Olsen, Susan D. Hudson, and Donna Thompson

Preventing injuries to children, especially debilitating and life threatening, requires an awareness of where these types of injuries occur during the school days. This review examines falls from playground equipment, events that have been identified as the leading causes of nonfatal unintentional injuries for children. Thus, the issue of playground safety is a topic of concern for health educators. School health educators play an essential role in developing safe and healthy outdoor play environments for children. This paper highlights the importance of injury prevention awareness and outlines different strategies that health educators can take for preventing playground injuries. In addition, this paper examines a project that was conducted in the state of Iowa in relation to what effects playground surfacing materials and staff training may have on injury prevention on school playgrounds. The results of the project concluded that with the addition of proper surfacing material and staff training, playground injuries could be reduced. Health educators need to investigate the types of playground injuries in current programs and develop a strategy to keep children healthy and active.