Master Health Literacy:
A Participant-Focused Program in Development

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Background: Master Health Literacy Initiative

Beyond Boundaries Innovation Project

- Provide skills, training, & tools to navigate deluge of information & misinformation in the area of health
- Create a sustainable and scalable program that can be utilized by others
  - Model MHL using existing Extension “Masters” programs
- Environmental scan: Determine current landscape of other programs
  - Explore format and learning objects to move forward
Background: Goal of the Project

Inspiration from Community Outreach Health literacy & Wellness programs:

- [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension’s Master Wellness Volunteer Program](#)

How would ours be different?

- Focus on information literacy skills
  - Navigating through Dr. Google to find Dr. PubMed & Dr. Mayo Clinic

- Create communities of people who can network and build from each other and pursue additional critical thinking skills
5 Goals as part of vision

- Programmatic scaffolding to enhance critical and information literacy skills.
- Incorporate aspects of data literacy
- Provide training for participants to collect and apply information and data about/for themselves and/or their communities.
- Participants are able to apply critical thinking skills to describe, investigate, and evaluate complex, controversial, and/or contradictory health-related topics.
- Participants share project result in a format of their choosing (blog post, presentation, community action, etc.)
Upon completion of the program:

- Define a need for themselves and/or within their community
- Identify potential partners with whom to build an action plan to address the need (as appropriate)
- Identify appropriate, credible sources to utilize when developing a knowledge base about the project/topic
- Determine accessibility to required resources (e.g. public awareness of open / free access, and services available through land grant universities, the state Library of Virginia, and local public libraries)
- Gather information and collect data for evidence in an appropriate and ethical manner
- Synthesize evidence in an appropriate and ethical manner
- Describe recommendations and possible next steps
- Determine appropriate dissemination outlets to publicize efforts
- Identify stakeholders that could develop or influence relevant policies or programs (as appropriate)
Methods: How we got started

To guide the program development we reached out to campus partners. We met with and talked to faculty and graduate student partners in:

- Population Health Sciences
- Agricultural Extension
- Student Health

Funding was applied for and received via an internal Beyond Boundaries Innovation grant from University Libraries, Virginia Tech
Methods: Project start and set up

Three students project assistants
- Literature review
- Environmental scan

Project set up
- Shared platform and documents
  - Google drive
- Data management and collection plan: planned and discussed data elements for project ahead of time; piloted data collection methods; goal reporting methods
Results: Defining the Need

**Effective use of the healthcare system**
- Half of high school graduates do not have the skills needed for effective use\(^1\)

**Health information is not presented in a way that is accessible by most Americans\(^1-3\)**
- Teach to be accessible and to grant accessibility to others

**Multiple reasons of less than ideal healthcare system use**
- Best improvement is by community improvement model\(^4\)
Results: Past success

Teaching and training

- Providing knowledge and the skills to pass it on
  - System of feedback and correction to improve current skills
  - Skills to tackle topics
  - Ideally, application of skills to any topic
  - Work with existing resources, structures, organizations in community
Results: Best Approaches

- Individual & community: program helps individuals help communities - adds to skills they already have
- Institutional trust: involves community in each step
- Online vs. in person: access & strength of connection
- Where to start: background information and skills
- Teaching method: how to approach a problem, existing resources, how to do research
- Discussion: teach skills, practice together
- Volunteer outreach: involve in each step, getting involved in meaningful ways
- Cost, assessment, logistics
Results: Selected Program Websites and Materials

Program Websites

- Junior Master Wellness Volunteer - Mississippi State University
- Master Wellness Volunteer Program - Texas A&M
- Latino Health Access - Nonprofit organization in California
- Urban Health Initiative - Emory University

Materials

- Medical Library Association list of Top Health Websites
- National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy - Appendix B

-what individuals can do to improve their own health literacy and health literacy in their communities

- HRSA List of Culture, Language and Health Literacy Resources
# Program Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Volunteer Hours</th>
<th>Example</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expert</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Level</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>Community promotion and accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Others</td>
<td>Health insurance, Environmental concerns, Mental health</td>
<td>41-60</td>
<td>Vaccination coverage, Herd immunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Exploration</td>
<td>Medicine history, How to decide between options, Preventative measures</td>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>How vaccines work, Choosing between vaccines, Conflicts between vaccines and medication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introductory</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to ask and find Information</td>
<td>How to identify good sources, Source evaluation</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>How to determine if you need a vaccine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation Time, Out of class work

VirginiaTech
Invent the Future
● Demonstrated need indicated from research to date
● Program capacity to serve various constituencies.
● Modifications to project plan based on literature review and scan include:
  ○ To scaffold the types of information, sources, and skills to address various experience
  ○ Add training to support final program projects.
Next Steps

Pilot program in 2018

● Finalize program mission & goals

● Hire student to develop modules and workshops

● Pilot with communities - potential partners identified:
  ○ Urban: Roanoke
  ○ Rural: Shawsville

● Assess the pilot program and make adjustments
Pulling it all together - Back to the big picture

- Focus heavily on research components
  - Not 5 questions to ask your doctor; plenty of those already!
- Develop analytical information literacy skills
  - Arm oneself with credible knowledge sources
  - Improve self-awareness of options as discuss with doctor best options for his/her situation
  - Provide for “better” conversations with doctors as have better baseline understanding of condition
- Create a community to scaffold levels of literacy
  - Beginners move to intermediaries and volunteer to help with beginners
  - Advanced help with intermediaries

Ultimate goal (or fantasy)
- Provide program where community level health needs can be addressed
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References


No notes in this presentation, but also a key reference worth highlighting:

This conference presentation is available via VTechWorks: https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/79663
Questions?

Our questions for you:
How would you approach this type of program?
Have you been involved with a similar program, and if so, do you have suggestions for us?