



Improving Access to Health Information in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Population

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Summary

This Project aims to address the disparities in access to health information for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population, particularly Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults and adolescents. This will be done by identifying which methods for finding and receiving information are most preferred by Deaf adolescents and young adults, which areas of Health Information have the greatest need for more (or more easily accessible) resources in those methods, and what resources are available that could be made more accessible or modified to fit the preferred formats.

Background

Studies have found health disparities between the Deaf population and the hearing population including:

- Higher levels of obesity- 34 percent vs 26 percent
- More likely to use the emergency department
- Higher levels of suicide attempts- 2.2% vs 0.4%
- Higher rates of intimate partner violence- 21% vs 14%

One important factor to address when addressing health disparities is Health Literacy. While there are abundant resources available both as in person handouts and online, it is difficult for patients to determine what is accurate and find information that fits both their reading level and their knowledge base. This is even more difficult for individuals for whom English is not their first language or who have other difficulties with communication with health professionals, such as the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population. Studies have found:

- Deaf individuals are 6.9 times more likely to have inadequate health literacy
- There is inconsistent knowledge among Deaf adults regarding cardiovascular risk factors
- 2002 study- 40% unable to name signs of a heart attack, >60% unable to name signs of a stroke
- Only 22.9% knowledgeable about cancer screening
- Deaf adults score lower on HIV/AIDS knowledge tests
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing adolescents have more difficulty than hearing adolescents at determining the accuracy of health information obtained from other people, deciding how much exercise is needed to stay healthy, and deciding when they needed to go see a doctor

Goals/Objectives

- Increase awareness of the unique health information needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults and adolescents
- Improve the availability and accessibility of health information for Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults and adolescents by:
 - 1) Identifying preferred methods of receiving health information
 - 2) Adapting or making more accessible existing health information for young adults and adolescents to use these methods

Methods

-Identify preferred methods of Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults and adolescents for finding and receiving health information.
What is most effective, useful, and preferred? Handouts, websites, lectures, discussions with a doctor? Would having information available in ASL (online videos, etc.) be preferred, or ASL videos and English handouts, or visual diagrams, or none of the above? Are there existing resources that are easily understandable and accessible?

-Identify current sources of health information.
Where are Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults and adolescents getting health information currently? Doctors, friends, parents, the internet?

-Identify health topics applicable to Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults and adolescents for which the preferred methods are not readily available or accessible
Where are the health information gaps? Are entire topics that are difficult to access information on, or is it more difficult to obtain further information after finding the basic information?

-Identify and select a single health information topic. Identify evidenced based resources for health information available in the community that address that health topic
What is available for hearing individuals that could be adapted? What is available that is already adapted, but may not be widely known or easily accessible?

-Identify applicable community partners to help adapt or make the existing resources more accessible to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adult and adolescent population, using the preferred methods for receiving information.

Potential Partners



Future Directions

- Work with community partners to promote the availability and use of health information resources
- Elicit feedback from Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults and adolescents regarding the resources and how they may be adjusted, expanded, or improved.
- Apply these methods to other health topics identified as requiring further resources
- Promote awareness among health professionals regarding alternate means of providing health information for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals
- Partner with health and educational organizations

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