Expanding Knowledge About Diabetes Among the Local Hispanic Community

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Introduction

• The 2010-2011 Presidential Scholars Program selected community health awareness as its topic for the year. Our group focus was “Cultural Contexts” and, through communication with numerous community contacts, a need was recognized within the Hispanic community.

• According to the US Census Bureau’s 2009 population estimates, approximately 15,000 people of Hispanic or Latino descent live in Charleston county. After discussions with several clinics, including the Seacoast Dream Center, as well as MUSC’s Hispanic Health Alliance, a need for Spanish health-related educational materials was continually noted.

• Our group focus was Type II Diabetes Mellitus. Our goal was to provide information on the disease state, appropriate diet and lifestyle changes, as well as produce a list of local clinics available at no cost to patients.

Methods

• Diabetes is noted as a growing epidemic for Hispanics. The American Diabetes Association states that about 11.8% of Hispanic Americans are living with diabetes and they are at a 1.9 times greater risk of developing diabetes than non-Hispanic whites of a similar age.

• We attempted to contact and evaluate several local clinics and churches serving the Hispanic Community. In the end, we were only able to evaluate four clinics including the CARES clinic, the Franklin C Fetter Sea Island Clinic, the Barrier Island Free Clinic, and the Dream Center Clinic. We found that these locations overall had lower levels of Spanish language materials (Figure 2). The clinics on John’s Island had the most availability of Spanish language materials. However, even locations serving a sizable percentage of Hispanic patients had few or no Spanish language materials available (Figure 3). Furthermore, we found that available Spanish language materials focusing on diabetes and healthy living catered to high literacy levels and lacked Hispanic cultural appeal.

Discussion

Distribution of our Spanish information on diabetes greatly increased the availability of such materials to the Hispanic population. We believe that this intervention will significantly increase Charleston area patients’ understanding of the disease state, disease management, and potential complications. Our goal was to educate and empower our target demographic to make healthier diet and lifestyle choices. By also providing information on the local clinics catering to the uninsured we improved communication between our various community partners and their patients, which was our ultimate goal.

The inter-professional nature of our group was especially helpful in achieving our goals. The professions involved in health care delivery, such as Dental, Health Professions, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy, created a well rounded project that addressed all issues.

• The estimated percentage of Hispanic patrons and exam room availability of Spanish educational materials about Diabetes.

• The estimated percentage of Hispanic patients treated at each location.

• The amount of Spanish educational materials about Diabetes.

• The amount of health educational materials (any language) in the available through local church ministries that serve the Hispanic Community and found that none had any materials about diabetes or healthy living to distribute to their Hispanic patrons.

• We also evaluated the availability of Spanish language materials available through local church ministries that serve the Hispanic Community and found that none had any materials about diabetes or healthy living to distribute to their Hispanic patrons. After evaluating each location, we distributed the posters and pamphlets we designed. The staff at these locations were overall very enthusiastic about receiving these materials and in several cases requested more materials. It is clear from our interactions with these community partners that there is a significant need for Spanish language materials that allow Hispanic patients to be informed about maintaining a healthy lifestyle and preventing the onset and complications of diabetes.

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References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
US Census Bureau
American Diabetes Association (Diabetes.org)