

Health Literacy Outreach for a Rural Somali Community

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Background

- Immigrants score lower on health literacy measures and underutilize disease prevention and healthcare services¹
- The Somali community in rural St. Peter, MN followed this trend, though the rural community backdrop magnified perceived isolation and misunderstanding by both immigrants and healthcare providers
- Developing specific health literacy strategies has shown promise in engaging the migrant community^{1,2}
- We utilized this idea to improve healthcare for the local Somali community in Saint Peter, MN
- Goals were to increase the understanding of wellness and health, offer education on common health topics, instruct on how to navigate the medical system, and connect resources for affordable family medical care

What we did

- Developed partnerships with Mayo Clinic Health System (MCHS) and the Somali Community Barwaago Organization
- Interviewed 400 Somali families in St Peter and Mankato/North Mankato to identify areas of need
- Resident physicians presented monthly health education sessions from July 2015 - June 2016
- Engaged Stakeholders: UMN Residency, MCHS, Nicollet Public Health and the Somali Community all committed to improving communication and trust between organizations



Health Education Topics

What is Health?
How best to access health care (When to go to ED/urgent care/PCP)
Preventive Health
Diabetes
Diabetes management during Ramadan
High Blood Pressure
Mental Health
Cancer Screening
Asthma
Immunizations
Heart Disease
Wrap up/Future Planning

What We Learned

- The Somali community relies heavily on the tradition of oral communication
 - We were able to engage trusted leaders to share information within the community
 - Attendance at sessions was often sparse, but information spread via oral communication
- The Somali community lacks understanding about how and when to access health care
 - Structural inequities within our health system further decrease the likelihood that non-native community members receive adequate care
 - Structural inequities within St Peter prevent Somali community building and magnify this gap
- The Somali community does not trust the food they buy at grocery stores, especially fresh produce
 - The Somali community is interested in and motivated to learn how to grow their own food

What's Next

- Sustainability: Keep momentum with regular educational offerings (Now done by MCHS)
- Evaluate the effect of educational offerings on the diagnosis and management of mental health conditions in the St Peter Somali Community

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References

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- Zhang Y et al. Provider Perspectives on Promoting Cervical Cancer Screening Among Refugee Women. J Comm Health. 2016 Nov 12.



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