

Healthcare Literacy Project

Rutgers University Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy

Project Description & Implementation Overview

For decades, studies have shown that managing medications can be a challenge for many people. Because of the current rapid changes in a complex healthcare system and the increasing need for self-management, pharmacists' roles have been emphasized in communicating with patients. In order to tackle the issue of communication amongst patients and different health care professionals, the Healthcare Literacy Committee at the Rutgers chapter of the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP) has made it our priority to create awareness among student pharmacists of the importance of health care literacy. We did so by planning a lecture series and interactive role-playing sessions for student pharmacists to develop their communication skills and become comfortable with talking on the patients' literacy level. Furthermore, we have spearheaded the creation of posters focused on four disease states: diabetes, asthma, hyperlipidemia and hypercholesterolemia that are geared towards patient education by utilizing graphics, cartoons and 4th grade level vocabulary for a better understanding.

As future pharmacists, we strongly believe that the key to minimizing health care costs is to help empower patients by equipping them with the necessary tools and knowledge about their health. However, communication is not unilateral as there are other parties involved; by acknowledging that everyone has to work together towards the common goal of improving overall patient health, the Rutgers AMCP Chapter has decided to undertake projects that would help expand healthcare literacy to all health professional schools at Rutgers University.

AMCP Healthcare Literacy Committee's first event was the Healthcare Communication Workshop. This event was held in collaboration with the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) to reach out to a larger student population. The guest speaker Ms. Janet Ohene-Frempong from Clear Language Group is a former director of the Health Literacy Project at the Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and provides seminars and institution-based coaching in consumer health communications. Based on her experiences in consultation on plain language and cross-cultural communication for a wide range of health information providers, she provided a very interactive and informative presentation about the concept of healthcare literacy and the various barriers in communication among providers and patients.

The Healthcare Literacy Committee has created posters on four disease states: diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and hyperlipidemia. The main purpose for this project is to provide patient-friendly information to the general population. We are expecting to utilize these posters at future health fairs and patient outreach events to increase the awareness of these four disease states. Hopefully by creating interactive tools, we will be able to open ways of communication with patients in our community about managing their health.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of Health Care Literacy Project was:

- To develop student pharmacists communication skills for a 4th grade literacy level
- To empower the public and health-related personnel to find, understand, evaluate, communicate, and use health information effectively
- To increase awareness of healthcare literacy, improve outcomes of patients, and increase the accessibility of resources to health care providers and patients

Project Budget: Expenses and Revenues

The school of pharmacy set aside grant money for health care literacy events/projects (the amount of the grant is unknown to the Chapter). The grant funded the posters (\$70 per poster), speaker (\$___) and future teaching tools developed by the chapter next year.

Who and How Many Chapter Members are Involved?

Lecture Series:

- 3 APhA E-board members helped set up for the event and ordered food
- 3 AMCP E-board members were involved in preparation of the event (inviting a speaker, providing transportation for a speaker, etc.)
- About 35 students participated in the event as audience.

Poster:

- 4 AMCP Chapter E-board members were involved; one E-board member in charge of one disease state
- 20 students were involved in the creation of the posters (ie. research, compilation of data, putting together information)

Who Should be Targeted? Audience or Involvement? How Do You Find Them? How Do You Contact?

Lecture Series: This event was open to all pharmacy students interested in healthcare literacy and patient outreach. Several emails were sent out to the entire pharmacy school from AMCP, APhA and the Dean's Office. Classroom announcements were also made to reach out to P1-P4s.

Poster: The poster was open to all the AMCP Rutgers chapter members who were interested in creating an interactive and educational poster on the four disease states. Sign-ups were done at the general interest meeting at the beginning of the school year.

What Materials are Needed? Outside Resources, Ordering, etc?

Lecture Series:

- Speaker
- Miscellaneous Items
 - Food/refreshment/drinks for participants
 - Flyers for promotion

Posters:

- Resources compiled by the pharmacy school at Rutgers University on patient education were utilized in addition to non-branded information provided by industry (ie. Novo-Nordisk, Johnson&Johnson)
- Poster
- Faculty guidance was provided in addition to collaboration with Pharma and national organizations on finding resources and developing the poster

Timeline for Implementation and Execution

Lecture:

1. Speaker

- One and a half month before the event: contact recommended speakers for their availability
- One month before event: finalize speaker engagements, facilitate travel arrangements for speaker
- Three weeks before event: gather information/theme about the event from the speaker for promotional purpose.
- One week before event: send reminder emails to speaker for confirmation and receive speaker biographies
- Two days before event: finalize preparation for the event and final reminder of event

2. Facility

- In the beginning of the year: book an auditorium, AV needs.
- One month before event: follow up with the facility to finalize costs and to find out availability of equipment
- Two weeks before event: walkthrough of the auditorium
- A couple hours before event: check prepared equipment, seating, etc.

3. Miscellaneous

- In the beginning of the year: search for interests from other organizations for collaboration opportunity
- Two month before event: search for students to volunteer
- One month before event: designate miscellaneous responsibilities for each organization
- Two weeks before event: promote and publicize event to student and faculty

4. Poster:

- Find students interested in contributing and working on an interactive poster geared towards patients on different disease states
- Assign a group leader and divide up the students into groups based on interest
- Give each group about 2 months to research and finalize a poster to be approved by the faculty advisor

Follow-up with Faculty Members/Volunteers/Participants

A 'Thank You' letter was sent to the speaker after the event. Feedback from the audience was discussed right after the event and taken note of to improve future events.

Project Evaluation:

What Went Well? What Didn't? How Would You Improve for the Next Year?

About 35 students participated in this event, and most students left had positive feedback after the two hour seminar. Many student pharmacists were eager to participate in the discussion.

Even though attendance was less than expected, the event was successful. It was very interactive because student pharmacists were comfortable in a small group setting and felt free to exchange opinions about the information provided by the speaker. For our next event, we will spend more time promoting the event.

The posters could be improved next year by abiding to the set deadlines so that the posters can be completed in a timely manner to be utilized more frequently at patient outreach programs.

Project Checklist (for lecture series):

- Create a timeline
- Search for collaboration opportunity with other organizations
- Divide jobs for each organization/group of student pharmacists
- Invite a speaker and set a date for the event
- Book a room for the event
- Collect an RSVP procedure for the event
- Place food/refreshment/drinks order
- Follow up with a speaker a couple weeks prior to the event, collect biographies
- Prepare equipment for the event such as laptop, speakers, and projector
- Promote to student pharmacists through Facebook invites, class announcements, emails, and flyer
- Create a sign-up sheet to collect contact information from the student pharmacists