Health Literacy in Dentistry

Dr. Kathy O’Loughlin,
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Roundtable on Health Literacy
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Health literacy in dentistry is “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate oral health decisions.”

Health Literacy Framework

Skills/Ability -> Health Literacy -> Demands/Complexity

Ruth Parker & Scott C. Ratzan (2010)
Past Activities

- Oral Health in America
- Healthy People 2010 and 2020
- National Call To Action To Promote Oral Health
- Institute of Medicine
- NIDCR Workgroup on Functional Health Literacy
- Presentations at NOHC, APHA, AADR IADR, NRHA
- National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy
Current ADA Activities

- Policies and Programs
- National Advisory Committee
- Health Literacy in Dentistry Action Plan
- ADA Strategic Plan
- Sharecare
- Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives Campaign
National Advisory Committee

- Policies, Programs & Research
- Challenges and Solutions
- Conduit of Information
- Public and Private Partnerships
- Identify Resources
- Health Literacy Expertise
Focus Areas

1. EDUCATION AND TRAINING (Change Perceptions of Oral Health)
2. ADVOCACY (Overcome Barriers by Replicating Effective Programs)
3. RESEARCH (Build the Science Base and Accelerate Science Transfer)
4. DENTAL PRACTICE (Workforce Diversity, Capacity, and Flexibility)
5. BUILD AND MAINTAIN COALITIONS (Increase Collaborations)
Coalition Building

• ADA: constantly working to be the trusted oral health resource for the public.
• We work hard to raise awareness through collaboration
  – Two examples:
    • Sharecare.com
    • Ad Council public service campaign
Sharecare and the ADA

- ADA joined forces with Sharecare, an online resource launched by Dr. Oz and Jeff Arnold of WebMD
- Questions asked by the public are answered by health professionals
- Oral health is one of 48 topics covered on the site.

Sharecare.com
Sharecare and the ADA

- ADA staff and its nine trained member spokespersons respond to questions that come through the website.

- Nearly 300 ADA active, licensed member dentists have answer questions as individual oral health experts on the site. [i.e. they do not represent ADA when they answer Qs]

- ADA spokespeople and member dentists have answered over 3,000 dental-related questions
Sharecare Collaboration

- What it does for the ADA:
  - promotes the ADA
  - reinforces our role as the leading advocate for oral health
  - engages the public
  - enhances the recognition/importance of the dentist as the authority on oral health and care
Sharecare Collaboration

Promoting Health Literacy

• ADA’s collaboration with Sharecare:
  – Helps improve oral health literacy of the public
    • an established group of dentists on the site provide credible oral health information (in response to questions from the public)
  – When questions are answered, people learn more about their oral health.
More Collaboration: Ad Council

- In 2010, the ADA convened the first National Roundtable for Dental Collaboration
  - 16 dental organizations were represented
  - Today: 23 participants
Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives

• This collaboration led directly to the formation of a new coalition: the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives now with an alliance of 34 oral health organizations

Partners Include
- Academy of General Dentistry
- American Acad. Oral & Maxillofacial Pathology
- American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
- American Academy of Periodontology
- American Association for Dental Research
- American Association of Endodontists
- Amer. Assoc. of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
- American Assoc. of Orthodontists
- American Assoc. of Public Health Dentistry
- American Association of Women Dentists
- American College of Prosthodontists
- American Dental Association
- American Dental Education Association
- Association of State & Territorial Dental Directors
- California Dental Association
- Dental Trade Alliance
- Hispanic Dental Association
- Medicaid/SCHIP Dental Association
- National Dental Association
- National Network for Oral Health Access
- Oral Health America
- Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention
- Society of American Indian Dentists
- US Department of Health and Human Services
Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives

• Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives submitted a successful proposal to the Ad Council in 2011

• A national public service campaign will launch a three-year national advertising campaign this summer, worth $100 million

• Goal of the campaign is to reduce the risk of oral diseases in children through prevention

• Campaign messages will target parents and caregivers to raise awareness and change behaviors
New consumer website launches June 2012, featuring:

• Dental symptom checker
• Life stage content
• Nutrition

MouthHealthy.org
Looking to the Future

• ADA: committed to improve health literacy of the public and the communication skills of the profession.

• We will work towards this goal
  – Independently
  – With the IOM
  – With other professional associations
Looking to the Future

• ADA looks forward to future collaborations.
• By forming coalitions, we bring our message of prevention to larger audiences.