INTRODUCTION

As medical advances continue to be made on a constant basis in today’s society, the prolongation of life has been a welcomed consequence. Individuals are now living with chronic diseases that would have had very morbid outcomes 50 years ago, which are now being managed with the advent of new medications and therapies.

However, in order to keep this trend projecting in the right direction, it is critical that patients remain compliant on their medication regimen prescribed by their healthcare professional. There are many limiting factors that prevent optimal therapy from occurring with the treatment of disease, with the population that sees the most shortcomings being senior citizens. Seniors are prone to carry more morbid conditions and carry the burden of more medical diagnoses. With this comes the need for increased therapies and more medication to manage these conditions. It is well known that as one ages, problems with visual acuity, hearing loss, receptivity to teaching, and cognitive decline become big factors in their life. Through the use of educational, easy to read, and understandable pamphlets, we hope to confront these educational barriers.

METHODS

- Participants at three workshops at senior centers received illustrative and easy to read pamphlets on commonly prescribed medications for seniors detailing common side effects and indications, as well as, an elective surgery tip sheet on common procedures for seniors.
- Active participation from the attendees was solicited by asking if participants knew of anyone or themselves who have been prescribed specific drugs detailed in the pamphlets or have been the recipients of any of the elective surgeries that the tip sheet discussed.
- For each medication class discussed, time was elicited to address any questions participants may have had.
- At the conclusion of the health literacy workshop, a survey was given to access our participants baseline knowledge prior to receiving the common medication pamphlets and elective surgery tip sheet compared with their understanding after receiving the information.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the last three years, the overall arching goal was to solidify a baseline level of knowledge or healthcare literacy of our clients, understanding of their medications, their contraindications, side effects to be weary of, and common practices that they can enlist when they visit different healthcare practitioners. This was with the hope that they can be an active part of their healthcare. Health literacy affects individuals across all cultures and races and can become even more of an issue as individuals age due to decline in cognitive function, visual, and hearing impairments. We attempted to combat this by providing easy to read and understandable handouts for our clients, verifying that participants of our workshops are aware of medication benefits, and ensuring the participants acknowledge potential side effects of medications both prescribed and herbal. In conclusion, we hope the health literacy pamphlets, along with the elective surgical tip sheet will help provide stronger patient-doctor relationships and reduced morbidity/mortality due to mismanagement of meds. Facilitating these discussions with active and eager participants can help reduce the overall medication complications in our local community and hopefully aid in safer medications practices.