ABSTRACT

Millions of adults in the United States lack the literacy prowess to navigate the healthcare system adequately, resulting in detrimental healthcare implications that lead to poor overall health outcomes. The health-related decisions adults make in life are shaped by the reading skills they learn and develop as children.

This community-based program coordinated with Kids Kollege after-school program at Jackson State University (JSU) incorporated a health literate approach to preventing future disease among adults.

BACKGROUND

• Population of students: African-American students at Kids Kollege program at JSU in Jackson, Mississippi
• Students ranged in from 5 to 14-years-old and came from both public and private schools from around the city and state.
• Kids Kollege offers after school programs from Monday to Friday. Health literacy program was incorporated during these sessions.
• Poor health literacy is a public health issue, and by teaching children the importance of health literacy, they will learn healthier habits and pass these lifestyle modifications along to others as well.

OBJECTIVES

• To connect concepts about organs, diseases, and nutrition as the students learn reading comprehension skills.
• To create a foundation for the students to have an understanding of healthcare literacy before entering adolescence and adulthood.

METHODS

• JSU’ Kids Kollege program was the population for the second consecutive year.
• Students varied in age and background but were predominately African-American and ages 5 to 14.
• Met with Ms. Leontyne Snell, Program Director of Kids Kollege at JSU. We talked about the need for student volunteers, what topics & times would be good for the students.
• Kids Kollege students were guided by faculty, JSU college student volunteers, “KREWE members,” and UMMC medical students through pre-planned sessions and guidance during the sessions at T.B. Ellis gym at JSU.
• Lesson plans were created according to the grades of the students (preschool; K-3; 4th-5th grade).
• “Treats” were bought for learning sessions to encourage participation among students when asked questions.
• Had gaming sessions with students, including literacy-oriented games, like “Word Bingo.”

FINDINGS

• Sessions involved lesson plans taught in a question & answer system with prizes as rewards for being correct.
• When not tutoring or hosting health literacy sessions, volunteers played games that facilitated learning, like word bingo.
• Continued covering organ systems – such as the kidney system, heart, nervous system, lungs, and skin.
• Talked to students about pathology/diseases they experienced or were curious about. For instance, a student with type 1 diabetes request we discuss what this means for him to his peers.
• Allowed students to be “teacher of the day.” They helped write facts and questions on board, pass out prizes to students who answered questions correctly, and gave their perspective on the topic.
• Found that personalizing subject material allowed students to pay attention more during lessons.
• Student volunteers were a crucial part of the success this year.

CONCLUSIONS

• If Mississippi children are not taught the importance of health literacy, they will become more susceptible to heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cancer, sleep apnea, asthma, psychosocial effects as well as a lot of other diseases.
• By creating a partnership between NMF, this health literacy program, and the Kids Kollege Program at JSU, we have begun a collaborative impact to sustain local efforts to create a healthier Mississippi for future generations.
• The location of this project was essential to the goals and outcomes of the project. Kids Kollege at JSU is located in “inner city” Jackson.
• Access to healthcare also applies to socioeconomic and education experiences. For students to be able to succeed, regardless of background, resources must be available. NMF-UHF and the funding it provided allowed me to contribute to the program through expenses of transportation to get to the program, buy resources (poster boards, markers, booklets) for the students, and prizes for the students to reward them in their daily activities.
• Poor health literacy is a public health issue, and by teaching children the importance of health literacy, they will learn healthier habits themselves and pass these along to their family, friends, and future colleagues.

REFERENCES
