

Center for Health Literacy Promotion Research Summary

Health Literacy & Depression in the Context of Home Visitation

Maternal Health Literacy: cognitive and social skills that determine the motivation and ability of mothers to gain access to understand and use information in ways that promote and maintain their health and that of their children. (Renkert and Nutbeam 2001)

Project Description

We explored health literacy in mothers as an underlying construct that develops through social interaction and reflection and involves an array of skills that enable a parent to manage personal and child health and healthcare. We hypothesized that depression impairs health literacy and impedes efforts to promote health literacy through home visitation. We analyzed an AHRQ/NIH database of 2,572 parent/child dyads compiled in a 2006–2008 quasi-experimental six-site nationwide study using multiple waves of measurement and a matched comparison group. Cohort families participated in home visitation programs augmented to develop parents' reflective skills. Visitors monitored depression, health- and healthcare-related practices, and surrounding family conditions at baseline and 6-month intervals for up to 36 months using the [Life Skills Progression](#) instrument. We examined differences in initial depression ratings for demographic subgroups and explored patterns of change in health literacy among depressed versus not-depressed parents. Correlation analysis showed that at each of four assessments better depression scores were consistently and positively correlated with use of information and services ($r = .21-.22$, $P < .001$) and with self-management of personal and child health ($r = .42-.49$, $P < .001$).

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For more information [Sandra Smith](#)

Key Findings

- Overall parents made significant improvements in health literacy ($P < .001$).
- As expected, depressed mothers demonstrated lower baseline health literacy scores than not- depressed parents; however, they achieved greater gains ($P < .001$). While depression is linked with lower maternal health literacy, after 1 year of enhanced home visitation, vulnerable mothers were better able to manage personal and family health and healthcare.
- Enhanced home visitation could be an effective channel to develop health literacy as a life skill, and to improve depression.

Publications

Smith, S. A., & Moore, E. J. (November 26, 2011). Health Literacy and Depression in the Context of Home Visitation. *Maternal and Child Health Journal* DOI 10.1007/s10995-011-0920- 8
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22120425>

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<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10995-011-0920-8 - page-1>

Presentations

Health Literacy and Depression in the Context of Home Visitation
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