Health Literacy

“Health Literacy is the ability to make sound health decisions in the context of every day life.”

(Ilona Kickbusch—Navigating Health www.kickbuschconsult.com/navigating-health)

The Language of Health: NZ Health Literacy

Help4U is a patient advocacy and health system navigation service, helping providers and consumers get to the right information, fast.

Purpose:
to research key problems in health system navigation and health literacy.

Methods:
review of existing datasets in the NZ national collections
facilitating multidisciplinary focus groups of consumers and providers
analysing referral documentation

Summary of Findings:
- Confusion and lack of consistent understanding and application of health terms.
- Numerous examples where misunderstood communication contributed to adverse health experiences.
- Lack of clarity and consistency in the published national data sets.

Omaha System Evaluation

Next Step: Empirical review of standardized terminology to describe health literacy and health system navigation barriers.

Methods: Descriptive analysis of data documented on 440 cases referred to Help4U (July 09—June 2010) coded retrospectively using the Omaha System.

Findings:
Domains: 70% of cases fit within the domain of Health-Related Behaviours.

Problems: Most common were Health care supervision (68%) with signs/symptoms reflecting uninsured medical expenses, difficulty communicating concerns to providers and unfamiliarity with options/procedures for obtaining services; followed by Communication with community resources (20%) and Income (10%).

Conclusion: Difficulties accessing timely and appropriate care can be meaningfully described using Omaha System.

Recommendation: Omaha System can be used as an interface terminology to facilitate consumer engagement in decision-making and health system navigation.

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References:

J. Kay Poulsen, MBA (dist), BA, Dip Sec Tchg, Karen A. Monsen, PhD, RN
1Help4U Ltd, Christchurch, NZ, 2University Of Minnesota School of Nursing, Minneapolis, MN, USA