



Go FIGure: Health Literacy and Freshman Interest Groups

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Context: Freshman Interest Groups

Mizzou offers over 100 Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs), ranging in topic from *Discovering Science* to *Social Justice Issues*. Groups of 15-20 freshmen are assigned to the same residence hall community, enroll together in three large-lecture courses, and enroll in a pro-seminar course in essential skills for college success.

In Fall 2010, three “literacy” projects were piloted within the FIG pro-seminar: health literacy; financial literacy; news literacy.

For the health literacy pilot, a 50-minute session was developed and co-taught by a health sciences librarian and the director for health promotion at the Student Health Center.

As a way to jumpstart the discussion, students were asked to “Find information on coping with stress” before coming to class.

Goals of Health Literacy Pilot

- ❖ **Help first-year students become wise healthcare consumers**
 - ❖ Know how to stay healthy
 - ❖ Know what to do if sick or injured
 - ❖ Know rights and responsibilities
- ❖ Provide resources of high-quality health information
- ❖ Demystify services available at the Student Health Center



Kate and Terry in the Office of Residential Life

Health Literacy Sessions

Sessions were deliberately scheduled for early fall in order to “catch” first-semester freshmen before the start of flu season and before their immune systems crashed.

In the pilot semester, 14 FIGs (over 250 students) attended a health literacy session.

Topics Covered

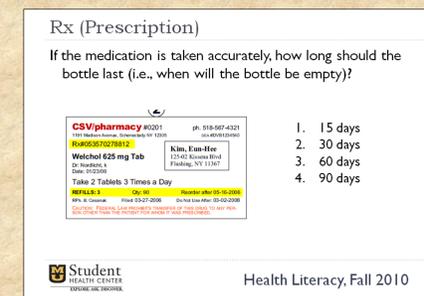
- ❖ Evaluating health information
- ❖ Reading prescription labels
- ❖ Knowing the appropriate level of care (e.g., urgent care vs. emergency care)
- ❖ Accessing services at the Student Health Center
- ❖ Communicating with healthcare providers



Reading Rx Labels: health literacy is intimately linked to mathematical literacy.



Medline Plus: the go-to source for high-quality health information.



MedlinePlus' **College Health** page and **Guide to Healthy Web Surfing** were highlighted during the session.

Lessons Learned

- ❖ **Collaboration:** Health Sciences Libraries and Student Health Centers are natural partners
- ❖ **Keep It Simple:** many first-year students have never made their own healthcare appointments
- ❖ **Logistics:** scheduling groups and finding rooms was more complicated than expected
- ❖ **Most Useful Activity:** students programmed the Student Health Center number into their cell phones during the session



Conclusions & Future Directions

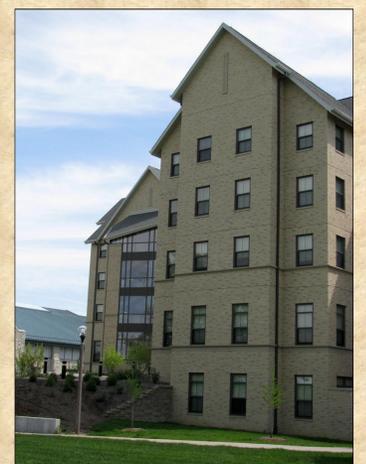
While the session itself was broad in scope, it provided first-year students an opportunity to think about their rights and responsibilities as healthcare consumers.

The health literacy sessions allowed the Health Sciences Library to reach a group it doesn't normally serve and to create new collaborative ties to the Student Health Center.

Based on positive feedback and recognition of importance of topic, the health literacy sessions will be continued in the FIG pro-seminars.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Associate Dean Ted Tarkow and Director of Residential Life Frankie Minor for their support of this pilot project.



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