

Adult Education For Health and Wellness

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Adult education in health and wellness is a necessity in our society. Obesity rates are on the rise and the deaths from cardio vascular disease continue to increase. So how are we able to become a healthier society? It all starts with education. Education in health and wellness will decrease stress and depression, and increase energy, optimism, and overall wellbeing.

Health and wellness are often used in the same context and clumped together. These two terms are similar but not identical. According to our book "health is an individual capacity that is also related to individuals' interactions and day-to-day living practices within their social, cultural, and environmental settings. Wellness is a process emerging from a focus on many aspects of a person's life and adoption of health-enhancing behaviors, as opposed to just minimizing conditions of illness." (Hill, 2010) Health simply describes the body in ways that we measure it. The ways we measure the body are; blood pressure, height, and weight. When determining health, we also evaluate the individual by doing x-rays, blood and urine analysis, and vision tests. Health is contained inside of wellness; but wellness goes beyond just health, and looks at the overall fitness of the person while doing certain activities. The term "General Wellness" is a term for someone who is just living in general. One good example of a person who is healthy but not fit is an Olympic skier who broke their leg. At this point the athlete is healthy but is not fit for competition. An example of a person, who is fit, is an individual who is both healthy and able to perform a specific job or activity.

Through education we are able to improve both health and wellness of the American public. Currently there is a 20-year gap in life expectancy between the

most and least advantaged American populations, this is not only due to poverty and disease but other factors such as; freedom from violence, clean water, and education. (Hill, 2010) The highly educated are usually able to have access to resources they need when trying to self educate on health and wellness topics. So the question is how are we able to educate society in general? Our reading suggests three approaches on how adult education can enhance the health of citizens.

Individual learning is the first approach. With advancements in technology self-directed learning has become one of the easiest ways to get information. There are many different resources on the Internet such as WebMd and Medline, which offer free information. When completing individual learning, each learner will define learning goals, seek learning resources, and evaluate the outcomes. (Hill, 2010) The individual learner often doesn't even recognize that he or she has used this format during their research.

Patient education materials are another form of individual learning. Medical providers often hand out pamphlets and brochures that are intended to help educate their patients. The problem with individual learning is the learner must have general adult basic education in order to try and decipher the information. In order to utilize the Internet and, other audio and video formats, they must have basic knowledge and access to computers and recent technological advancements. Andrew Pleasant is an author who wrote an article in *New Direction For Adults in Continuing Education*. His article focused on improving individual, community, and global health through education and health literacy. He agreed that literacy was an issue in improving health. "Numerous research efforts have demonstrated that

patients with low health literacy experience poor adherence to medical regimes; poor understanding of the complex nature of their own health; a lack of knowledge about medical care and conditions; poorer comprehension of medical information; low understanding and use of preventive services; poorer overall health status; and earlier death.” (Pleasant, 2011)

The second approach discussed in our reading is one-on-one interactions between individuals and health professionals. This is where most health education takes place. In the United States, people on average visit a physician three times per year. The average visit is only 21 minutes long. (Pleasant, 2011) This allows a short time for education. Education takes place by communication between both parties. This communication involves both treatment recommendations and diagnosis. The provider will make suggestions on how to better live a healthy lifestyle and treatment recommendations, but ultimately it is up to the patient if he or she follows the health professional’s advice. This often leads to dilemma and can leave both parties feeling frustrated. “Given the short duration of many one-on-one consultations, the goal of changing health behaviors is difficult to achieve, particularly because many patients often have misconceptions of health and medical treatment that are not adequately addressed by health professionals.” (Hill, 2010, pg.298)

In order for this style of learning to be effective there must be good communication between both the medical provider and the patient. Asking questions and listening to answers is a vital key on both sides of the conversation. They can then figure out the patient’s goals and agree on each individual role in the

patient's road to wellness. In order to better communicate with patients, medical providers have taken courses on how to use simple language, speak slower, and provide easy written instructions.

Community health learning is the final approach that is outlined in our text. "Learning that takes place in communities around health may take place at the individual, community, or population levels and is intended to bring about voluntary, informed behavior change that is central to achieving and maintaining good health." (Hill, 2010, pg.300) Adult educators can assist in creating programs to better assist and deliver information during community learning events. These types community health learning events have been at churches, grocery stores, health fairs, and shopping malls. Often doctors, nurses, and other medical providers are brought in to help educate the general public on general concepts of health and wellness. Community health learning events allows the general populace to engage in adult learning activates without feeling the stress and anxiousness of going to a doctors office.

From my research I have found a common focus, and that focus is education. Education on health and wellness is clearly needed. 60 percent of all deaths each year caused by chronic diseases such as obesity, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancers. (Pleasant, 2011) With proper education we can reduce these numbers and allow our society to live healthier, and enjoy increased wellness.

Works Cited

Hill, L. (2010). Adult Education for Health and Wellness. In *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (2010 ed.). California: Sage Publications.

Pleasant, A. (2011). Health Literacy: An Opportunity to Improve Individual, Community, and Global Health. In *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. Wiley Periodicals.