

Health television: A way for people with low literacy to learn more about the food they eat

Margot Kaszap, Full Professor, Université Laval

Myriam Drolet, Researcher, Groupe de recherche et d'intervention en santé et en alphabétisation (GRISA – Health and Literacy Research and Intervention Group)

Isabelle Gagné, Master's in Anthropology, Université Laval, 2009

Abstract

February 2010

This work was funded by a contribution from the Canadian Council on Learning. However, the opinions expressed herein are solely those of the authors. The Canadian Council on Learning bears no responsibility for its content.

Abstract

The goal of this research is to test a new approach to assist health professionals when talking to seniors about their diet. This new tool consists of using video and illustrations.

Problem. Health services are constantly evolving. Patients and those around them are required to shoulder more responsibility. In this new context, people want more information in a format that they understand in order to better manage their health. Also, health facilities want to make this information easily accessible to them.

In Québec, as in the rest of Canada, 80% of seniors rank among the two population groups with the lowest levels of literacy (IALSS, 2003). This fact implies that they need help to understand and take action with regard to their health.

Numerous studies and reports (Murphy et al., 1996; Rudd, 2000; *American Medical Association*, 1999; Baker et al., 1997; Wilson & McLemore, 1997) have reached the same conclusions:

- information dispensed by health professionals does not lead to the desired results;
- health education is not, as it is now provided, a way to prevent disease or improve and maintain health, and finally;
- the cultural gap between health professionals and patients is widening, leading to failed treatment.

It therefore seems essential to take another look at the traditional approach used with seniors (passing on information using brief verbal explanations and written leaflets describing the disease and the treatment to be followed) in order to replace it with another (building up the seniors' health knowledge) using video and illustrations. However, we must first verify whether these media are effective, which is the purpose of this research.

Health television: A way for people with low literacy to learn more about the food they eat