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Putting Nursing Students at the HeLM of Health Literacy: Effect of a Health Literacy Module (HeLM) on the Health Literacy Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes of Nursing Students

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Background: Effective communication is a foundation of high-quality, patient-centered health care. Understanding health literacy is an essential attribute that health care professionals need to possess in order to promote effective partnerships with patients and their significant others. Nurses, especially, need to be involved in addressing the epidemic problem of low health literacy in the United States because they are responsible for the majority of patient, caregiver and community health education and communication. Nurses play a key role in providing health care information to individuals, families and groups in a variety of settings and therefore should be educated about the essentials of health literacy, its prevalence in society and its relationship to health outcomes. There are currently no standards for including health literacy training in the undergraduate nursing curriculum. Few studies have been conducted to assess nursing students' knowledge, practice and attitudes or perceptions of health literacy which are also components of the Quality Safe Education for Nurses (QSEN) initiative (QSEN, 2014).

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Borrero Health Literacy Module (HeLM) on health literacy knowledge, skills and attitudes of nursing students using a pretest and posttest.

Method: Pre-licensure baccalaureate nursing students (n = 180) were invited to participate in this quasi-experimental study, which consisted of a 2 hour classroom session. Students completed the health literacy questionnaire: The Health Literacy Knowledge and Experience Survey (HL-KES) as both a pretest and a post test. The classroom session included the components of the HeLM which was designed by the researcher and validated by two experts in the field of higher education and health literacy.

Findings: The results of the HL-KES pretest and post-test analyses showed statistical significant differences in the average literacy score change of +4.97, the 5-unit difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$) at the .1 level of significance. The questions of the HL-KES were grouped according to five content areas and the statistical analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores resulted in statistically significant differences in each content area. Statistical analysis supports that the Borrero HeLM made a statistically significant difference in the health literacy knowledge, skills and attitudes of nursing students who participated in this study.

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