

# Health education materials used to promote oral health

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The paper "Heath Education Materials Used to Promote Oral Health" is a perfect example of an assignment on health sciences and medicine. Available literature demonstrates that dental decay and gum disease continue to affect millions of people worldwide in spite of the fact that they can be successfully prevented through behavior modification (Arrow, Raheb, & Miller, 2013). This paper demonstrates how health education materials can be used to promote oral health by appealing to the targeted populations to maintain healthy personal behaviors. The target populations selected for this paper include elementary children (4-11 years) and young adults (21-28 years) of African American descent. This minority ethnic group has been selected based on the realization that African Americans are more likely than whites to be affected by the dental disease due to a multiplicity of factors, including eating patterns and dietary practices, socioeconomic status, access to care, and health-seeking behavior (Marshall et al., 2013). The topic is on promoting oral health using available health education materials with the view to reinforcing healthy personal behaviors meant to alleviate incidences of gum disease among the targeted populations. The key messages targeted at elementary children include (1) using a combination of pictures and simple colored text to describe gum disease and its causes, (2) using two pictures (one for a healthy gum and the other for a diseased gum) and colored arrows that pinpoint areas of infection to increase understanding of gum disease, and (3) using pictures of popular animals with images of human teeth and simple text to demonstrate effective brushing techniques. The key messages targeted at young adults include (1) using text to describe gum disease and its causes, (2) using pictures and text to illustrate tips for a

healthy mouth, and (3) using symbols and understandable text to describe the general health factors that cause gum disease and how best to prevent these factors through behavior modification. Elementary children should be assessed by analyzing the level of demonstrated interest in the key messages and how they are able to relate the messages to real-life contexts. A high level of interest shows that the messages are appropriate in terms of comprehension and application. It is also important to undertake real demonstrations of tooth brushing activities to determine whether the children will brush their teeth using the techniques described in the messages. Additionally, assessment can be done by asking the children to recall what they have learned after being exposed to health messages. A high recall rate shows that health messages are appropriate for the target audience. Lastly, feedback can be used to assess the level of comprehension as demonstrated by the fact that individuals who ask a lot of questions after exposure to health promotion messages often reveal a high level of understanding. Young adults should be assessed by analyzing how they have been able to achieve behavior change (e. g., consumption of fruits vegetables, smoking cessation, routine brushing, and oral screening habits) after exposure to the health messages. Their level of self-efficacy and attitudes toward oral health should also be assessed to determine if the health messages have been able to reinforce behavior change intentions. Additionally, it is important to assess their level of knowledge construction and use with regards to oral health to determine the population's capacity to synthesize and understand the information contained in the health messages. For example, an assessment of how the young adults associate

their lifestyle behaviors with oral health outcomes should be undertaken to determine their level of understanding of the general health factors that cause gum disease and how these factors can be prevented through behavior modification. Finally, it is important to assess the level of interest to the health messages as this would help determine the existence of age or cultural barriers associated with the messages. The messages targeting elementary children should be transmitted via charts/posters hanged on classroom walls, while those targeting young adults should be transmitted via leaflets, posters or brochures. Color, texture, simplicity, and simulation (e. g., using popular animals to represent human beings) are all important in conveying the health messages targeting elementary children because of their capacity to reinforce interest and ease of understanding. It is important to use culturally-specific text and materials when targeting young adults as they are mature enough to relate the educational messages to their own cultural contexts. The consent of parents and school administrators may be needed in assessing elementary children as behavior modification efforts targeting this group of the population are largely influenced by parents and school settings. Community leaders and social support groups may be involved in assessing young adults as these groups may provide important age-specific and cultural-appropriate indicators associated with the population. This paper has been successful in demonstrating how health education materials can be used to promote oral health by appealing to the targeted populations to maintain healthy personal behaviors. From the discussion, it can be concluded that health promotion efforts for oral health should consider the characteristics of target audiences in developing health

messages that have the capacity to increase knowledge and modify behavior.