



**Notes from Community Conversation on Health Literacy
November 27, 2007**

Community Challenges

- Need to address health literacy issues for health providers and for the general public and these are two distinct processes
- Our complicated, fragmented health system that doesn't value spending time or money on education and prevention
- Lack of common standards and prohibitive costs have slowed the adoption of information technology solutions (electronic health records) that could improve communication (between providers, between providers and schools)
- Basic resources such as visuals/charts on various medical procedures aren't available or aren't used to assist non-English speaking patients (this might be due to costs or it might be something that is overlooked)
- Our community has over 52 active languages and language barriers are real concerns for providers
- Consumers/patients do not take primary responsibility for their health (too much reliance on physicians or the system) and/or physicians do not respond to patients positively when they ask questions/seek alternative solutions
- Senior citizens are a vulnerable group since they often don't understand the range of insurance options yet are likely to need health care
- Young children are a vulnerable group especially those living at lower incomes who cannot access care
- Distributing health information to the general public is difficult because the information changes so often and its difficult to simplify the information while maintaining its integrity
- Consumers rely upon the opinion of physicians more than other sources of information so the messages often need to come directly from physicians even though other sources may be valid
- General media channels such as newspapers and TV are essential information channels for health but media tends to view its role as entertainment and sometimes breeds confusion with sensationalist reporting

Work in Progress

- Community Health Care is implementing a community health worker program; the health workers will take health education to their ethnic communities and also help their neighbors navigate entry to the health care system. This is a relatively inexpensive way to extend outreach to ethnic and minority communities.
- Rock Island County Health Department has Peer Counselors that work in the areas of HIV/AIDS and breastfeeding. Through contacts often at local churches these individuals are effective at providing education in the Hispanic and African American communities.

- Genesis and Trinity have collaborated to create a Health Facts card which will encourage individuals to maintain and carry a list of current medications and other critical health information at all times. The Quad City Health Initiative will be a community partner in promoting and replenishing supplies of these Health Facts cards at local pharmacies, physician offices, etc.
- A Scott County Health Department and community effort around preventing falls among the elderly has begun. Several recent experiences of falls resulting in immediate death have prompted conversations about how these accidents can be prevented.
- Many physicians offices are using scribes now to take detailed patient histories and to record detailed instructions provided to patients

Collaboration Opportunities

- Media trainings for physicians to create a network of physicians who are comfortable acting as spokespeople for health issues (IF there is interest among physicians)
- Focus groups with consumers to understand what information they need to become better educated patients and also what barriers they need to overcome to be active participants in the care process
- Community education on health/prevention topics
- Sharing resources to create or convert health education and health messages so we're all (providers, health departments) presenting common information
- Providing tools or education for consumers on how to be their own best health advocate and make the case that it is in the person's best interest to serve in that role

Level of Awareness/Priority of Issue

- Health Literacy emerged as one of the top 3 issues during Rock Island County Health Department's planning process; no new initiatives yet
- Physicians recognize the importance of this issue but time and costs limit their ability to address the issue

Attendees

Walter Bradley, Trinity Regional Health System
 Amy Thoreson, Scott County Health Department
 Cathy Whittlesey, Scott and Rock Island County Medical Societies
 Wendy Trute, Rock Island County Health Department
 Karrie Abbott, United Way of the QCA
 Ann Grove, World Relief
 Nancy Kelting, Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center
 Bud Phillis, QCHI
 Nicole Carkner, QCHI
 Becki Anderson, QCHI