Abstract

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are acknowledged as a primary source of comfort, support, and provision of guidance for many individuals during a time of need. Although they engage the community in a variety of ways to support fulfillment of spirituality and management of life experiences, FBOs may not fully address the healthcare concerns and needs of their parishioners. One such concern is the lack of adequate health literacy and promotion of community-based health.

Overview

Health literacy is a major factor influencing the outcomes of community health. It addresses a person’s ability to read, comprehend, and take action on health information. Initially identified as a national and significant healthcare issue in 2004 by the Institute of Medicine, health literacy remains problematic for the vast majority of Americans. As recently as 2016, organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2015) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ, 2016) recommended health care providers continue their efforts for promoting a national action plan to address this serious issue. Recent assessments of national health literacy report only 12% of the population have adequate health literacy levels. Opportunities exist for health care professionals to change community health outcomes by addressing this important issue.

Purpose

• Examine the active role of faith-based organizations (FBO’s) in health promotion and impact on health outcomes.
• Identify opportunities for nurses and other health care providers to support culturally congruent and spiritually connected health care.

Methods

• Systematic search using CINAHL, Medline, & OVID-databases
• Keywords: Promotion of health literacy, health education and spirituality, faith-based health education, faith-based organizations and health literacy
• Inclusion criteria: English language, health literacy, faith organizations, 2010-current, full text available, health promotion intervention
• Exclusion criteria: non-US based intervention

Results

A total of 128 articles were selected for review. The articles presented a variety of data outlining the need for a community-based approach in supporting health outcomes, connection of health literacy levels to health habits, and role of community partners (e.g. religious leaders) in influencing health behaviors. The articles were a variety of case studies, reviews, educational interventions, and quasi-experimental approaches. Multiple studies suggest the training of organizational peer mentors as lay healthcare providers in the support of maintenance of health behavior change (Clemens-Cope, Marks & Dorn, 2015; Tettey, Duran, Andersen, Washington & Boutin-Foster, 2016; Haynes, 2017).

Table of Selected Literature for Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clemens-Cope, Marks &amp; Dorn</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Health Care Management Review</td>
<td>The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Health Promotion</td>
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Discussion

Nurses have a unique role in the support of community-based health care. Consistently remaining the most ethical profession and a primary promoter of patient education and disease prevention, nurses are able to influence change in outcomes by the active incorporation and involvement in health promotion methods such as health literacy support. Health literacy is a primary The American Nurses Association (ANA, 2017) and National League for Nursing (NLN, 2017) acknowledge the importance of faith and spirituality when understanding and addressing a person’s health and illness experiences (ANA, 2017). Collaborative partnerships between health care providers and faith leaders bridge the gap of the physical and spiritual in meaningful ways. Significant research is present in the theoretical support of the inclusion of spirituality in health promotion activities. However, limited published examples exist outlining the details of health, academic, and faith-based partnerships. Opportunities are present for the continued, documented efforts of effective, collaborative partnerships. A major limitation to this research is that this was not an exhaustive review of the literature. A variety of additional search terms should be considered for a complete review of the literature on the subject.

The interconnectedness of scripture, faith, and health potentially supports the majority of Americans identifying as religious (69%) and/or regularly attending church (48%); Whisenant, Cortes, & Hill, 2014). Nurses are in prime position to support faith efforts in the promotion of healthier living and achievement of outcomes. Recognition of the collaborative role of religious leaders in the coordination, implementation, and maintenance of sustained change may be the link to achieving long lasting community health results.

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