Health Literacy Policy for Culturally Appropriate Health Systems

Workshop: Health literacy in Policies - European and National Perspectives

16TH WORLD CONGRESS ON PUBLIC HEALTH – October 2020

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Why policy for culturally appropriate health systems?

- Culture influences health behavior including use of healthcare systems.
- For equity, health information needs to be accessible and understandable culturally and language appropriate.
- Migration and Immigration often lead to culture change from traditional to Western.
- Policies need to address the above including resource allocation.
Israel - A Country of Diverse Cultures

Moslem, Christian and Druze Arabs Speaking
21%

New Immigrants:
Russia, Ethiopia, Europe, US: 10%

Other: 4%

Jews living in Israel more than 10 yrs: 65%

Cultural Competence:
“The capacity to function effectively as an individual and as an organization within the context of cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities.”
Policy for Cultural Appropriateness – the case for Israel

Israel Ministry of Health Directive (2011) requiring the entire health system to be culturally accessible:

- Training of staff re communication skills
- Simultaneous translation during care (telephone, in-person)
- Culturally adapted educational materials and tools
- Public participation including religious/ethnic leaders
- Research and monitoring
- Appointing institutional coordinators
“Refuah shlema”
cross-cultural mediators for health of Ethiopian immigrants

- Initiate and support community health promotion initiatives
- Support navigation of the healthcare system
- Promote capacity building and cultural competency skills of primary healthcare staff.
- Build long term trust with the community is essential when dealing with crises such as testing and tracking during COVID-19.

Levin-Zamir D et al, GHP Journal, 2017
Digital Innovative Intervention for Immigrants

- Instructional videos
- Supporting digital health literacy skills for internet
- Videos specifically instructing on how to use smartphones for accessing health information
Health literacy, culture and COVID-19

• Producing culturally appropriate information on Covid-19 prevention, testing and care: Hebrew, Arabic, Russian and adapted to the ultra-religious Jewish community
• Health promoting holidays – Passover, Ramadan, Easter during lockdown
• Identifying community lay leaders especially during outbreaks
• Collaborating with multi-lingual mass media
Conclusions

Cultural appropriateness:
• is an essential part of health literacy
• can be promoted through digital and innovative resources responsiveness
• must be part of national health policies including emergency contingency plans.

“The active soul is a healthy soul”
“My strength is not as an individual but as a collective”


Thank you!

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