

Using Information to Improve Health Literacy

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Diabetes is a chronic disease that affects a large amount of the population. 8.3% of the population in the United States has diabetes (American Diabetes Association, 2011). Every year there are many patients who are newly diagnosed with diabetes. A diagnosis of diabetes is not a death sentence. With proper blood glucose control, patients can live long, productive, healthy lives.

The topic was chosen based on this writer's personal experience with a family member with diabetes. Information given at diagnosis can be overwhelming and poorly retained. By providing patients with brief information at initial diagnosis, the information will be better retained. Once a patient has digested the initial information, they are given access to credible websites that provide more information.

Developing an Informational Flyer

A flyer to assist with providing patients with information was developed for newly diagnosed patients. The flyer is also useful in previously diagnosed patients to assist them with finding more information on their disease. Whether a patient is highly educated or not, newly diagnosed patients may be overwhelmed with their diagnosis and the information provided must be simple to ensure understanding.

The flyer developed kept in mind that patients experience varying levels of health literacy (See Figure 1). The flyer includes definitions of many key words that health care providers may use in explaining the disease to patients. These include: A1C, blood glucose, blood glucose meter, and insulin. Websites that can provider further information were also provided.

Websites

The internet can produce an overwhelming amount of information. In regards to health information, it is important that patients have access to credible, accurate information. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) assists with advocacy efforts and education for diabetic patients (ADA, 2011). Their website provides definitions, tips for living with diabetes, and educational resources for patients. The information provided is backed by evidence-based research and provides reliable information.

‘Dlife’ is a website that provides patients with tips on how to manage their diabetes. There is information for newly diagnosed patients, as well as previously diagnosed patients who wish to better control their blood glucose. The information provided is written by healthcare providers who are experts in the area (dlife, n.d.).

‘Taking Control of Your Diabetes’ (tcoyd.org) is a website that “educates and empowers the Diabetes community” (Taking Control of Your Diabetes, n.d.). The website is part of a not-for-profit organization that provides diabetic patients, their families, and healthcare providers information to arm them in their quest for health. The information is provided through the University of California, San Diego. It is accurate and reliable information.

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) is a site that is specifically geared for type I diabetics. Their mission is “to find a cure for diabetes and its complications through the support of research” (Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, n.d.). The website provides patients with information on how to live with diabetes and ensure that they stay as healthy as possible.

Conclusion

Flyers are a method to provide patients with brief information and encourage them to seek more information to control their disease. The flyer created for newly diagnosed diabetic patients provides a brief overview of the disease, definitions for keywords associated with their disease, and websites that will provide them with more information.

Figure 1: Diabetes Flyer

LIVING WITH DIABETES

Diabetes

Diabetes is a lifelong disease where the body is no longer able to control **blood glucose** levels through normal methods.

New Diagnosis

If you are newly diagnosed with Diabetes, you probably have a lot of questions. Your healthcare provider can help you learn to control your disease and provide you with information on how to best manage your **blood glucose**.



Treatments

Your healthcare provider will guide you in determining whether your diabetes can be controlled with oral medications or will require injections of **insulin**.

Controlling your **blood glucose** now, will ensure a long and healthy life in the future.



A1C: a test that measures average blood glucose levels over the past 2 to 3 months

Blood glucose: the main sugar found in the blood and body's main source of energy. Normal levels are 70-120.

Blood glucose meter: a small portable machine used by people with diabetes to check their blood glucose levels.

Insulin: a hormone that helps the body use glucose for energy. When the body does not make enough insulin, it is taken by injection.

Websites:

American Diabetes Association.
www.diabetes.org 

Taking Control of Your Diabetes
www.tcoyd.org 

dLife
www.dlife.com 

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation
www.jdrf.org 

References

American Diabetes Association. (n.d.). <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/diabetes-statistics/?loc=DropDownDB-stats>

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. (n.d.). http://www.jdrf.org/index.cfm?page_id=100694

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