Hospital Collaboration with a Public Library
[poster]

Margot Malachowski, MLS, Baystate Health

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/margot_malachowski/5/
Introduction

Baystate Health is a teaching hospital located in Springfield, MA.

Our city’s population is 52% White; 22% Black; 39% Hispanic (regardless of race). Nearly 24% of our families speak Spanish at home. Poverty rates are 27%, as compared with 10% statewide.

These populations are less likely to use the internet to find health information.

The Dept of Health & Human Services draws a correlation between internet-based information seeking and the status of people experiencing disease, finding inverse relationships between internet use and incidence of asthma, diabetes, heart disease and other conditions.

Libraries play a role in Healthy People 2020 by maintaining public internet access and teaching computer literacy classes.

Methods

Baystate Health supports our community in finding reliable health information.

We collaborate with Springfield City Library to teach classes on using www.medlineplus.gov, the consumer health information portal from the National Library of Medicine.

In our classes, we teach how to search for health conditions, diagnosis, tests, treatment, nutrition and alternative therapies. All information is science-based and written for consumers.

Results

Our class participants have low- to moderate computer skills. In FY 2011, we administered pre- and post-instruction surveys to assess confidence in information-seeking and computer skills.

After 90 minutes of instruction, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that they know more about MedlinePlus, were more comfortable with using a computer, and knew where to get more help.

Conclusions

Strong start: At least 90% of Massachusetts public libraries offer instruction on general internet use.

Work to do: Only 10.8% offer classes on accessing government information, 13.6% on accessing job-seeking information, and 14.5% on accessing medical information.

Our goal: We hope to attach Massachusetts public libraries to national efforts to improving health literacy skills by 2020.

Bibliography


Our problem? Low enrollment. We averaged 4-5 participants per class. Other computer classes at Springfield City Library attract 7-9 participants per class.