

Health Literacy: Knowledge and Experiences of Traveller Women

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Health Promotion Conference 2015

Overview of the Presentation

- Background to the research
- Traveller Health & Health Literacy
- Methodology
- Key Findings
- Conclusions
- Further research
- Questions

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Background to the Research

- Undergraduate degree in health promotion
- Working in the area of Traveller health
- Interest in literacy
- Postgrad in adult education
- Researched health literacy
- Identified a gap in policy

Aim

The aim of this research was to;

- gain more understanding and insight into health literacy
- to explore the knowledge and experiences of Traveller women in the area of health literacy
- to draw relevant conclusions & make recommendations based on the outcomes

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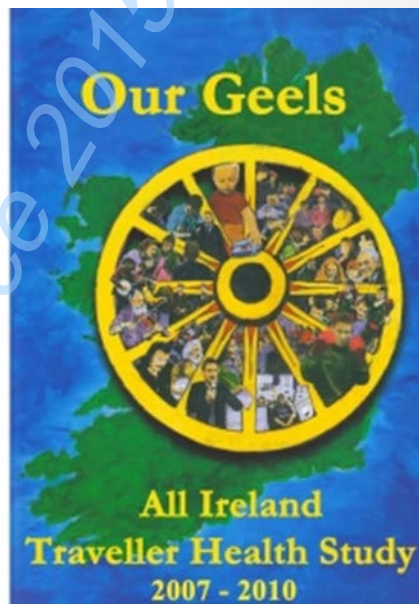
Travellers in Ireland

- Indigenous to the island of Ireland the Traveller community are an ethnic group that share a common history, value system, set of traditions, language and religion



Traveller Health

All Ireland Traveller Health Study 2010 (AITHS) exposes the harsh reality of the health status of Travellers in Ireland



Life expectancy

- Mortality rates: Traveller men live 15 years less than the majority population; Traveller women 11 years less. Infant mortality rates being 3.5 times higher

Main causes of death

- Heart disease & stroke-25%
- Cancer-19%
- Rate of suicide is x6 higher

Education & Literacy AITHS (2010)

- 50% of Travellers had difficulty reading the instructions for medication
- Education was identified in the data (by Travellers and Providers) as of key importance. It was viewed as a major barrier to improved lifestyle and health. The negative effects were reported to begin in early childhood (as early as 3 years old) and to continue throughout the lives of Travellers

Primary Health Care & the Role of the Community Health Worker

- The National Strategy for Traveller Health 2002-2005 recommended the development of PHC projects in the Traveller community based on the communities own values and perceptions to produce a positive health outcome
- The CHW's role includes; links with service providers, signposting, identifying health needs & developing health promotion materials

What is Health Literacy?

Relatively new concept

Nutbeam (2000) identifies;

- Basic/Functional: basic reading skills
- Interactive: to actively participate, extract information & meaning
- ***Critical Health Literacy***: build on previous levels to critically analyse information

Rudd (2009) outlines the importance of clear communication;

- Information that is easy to understand
- Barriers – terminology, materials & assumptions
- Use of alternative mediums in relation to health promotion literature
- The importance of cross sector collaboration

Methodology

Narrative Inquiry;

- Enables the validity of the lived experience of the participants. Clandinin & Connelly (1990) the study of ways humans experience the world. It can bring together layers of understandings about a person and their culture
- Three Traveller women working as Community Health Workers participated in the research

Key Findings

- A strong value on religion, family & the role of women within the community
- Culturally Travellers passing information to each other through oral traditions
- Highlighted literacy as a barrier to further education
- Health literacy described as ***'not just reading, you need to be able to understand'***
- Barriers identified such as complicated language & health professionals assumptions
- Importance of literacy friendly health promotion materials

Findings continued...

- Their role as CHW's as an instrument to generate change in the health status of the community
'we work with services and we try to break things down [medical jargon] so that the Traveller community that cant read can understand this'
- PHC project has developed knowledge and access but also self esteem & confidence to empower the women to make changes

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Conclusions

- Health Literacy needs to be recognised as a stand-alone public health issue for the Traveller community in order to be addressed effectively
- Critical health literacy in addition to functional health literacy is the best method in empowering the community to achieve overall better health literacy

Conclusions continued...

- Culturally appropriate literacy friendly health promotion messages are key in promoting health to Travellers
- Traveller peer led health educators are a key resource and can work collaboratively with health services and the community to increase health literacy levels among Travellers.

Further Research

- Literacy Levels of Travellers and its affect on health status
- The importance of critical health literacy and how it can be measured
- Cross sector collaboration in addressing the area of health literacy

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Any Questions??

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