



Public Health Association of BC



Addressing Inequities in Health Through Literacy and Health Literacy

April 16th 2010 9am-12noon

Workshop Summary

On April 26th, 2010 the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) held a workshop on “Addressing Inequities in Health through Literacy and Health Literacy.” The format of the workshop was a regional video conference. The main location of the event was in Vancouver where approximately 80 people attended. An additional 30-40 people attended via video feed in Victoria, Kelowna, and Surrey.

The workshop featured a panel of public health leaders discussing the concrete actions for improving health literacy and reducing inequalities. The event began with an opening address from PHABC President Ted Bruce and an introduction from Chair of the PHABC Capacity Building Committee Dr. Irv Rootman. He was followed by a panel of speakers who described their experiences in health literacy, answering the questions “What works?”, “What doesn't?” and “What might?” Kelly McQuillen gave her perspectives from the Patients as Partners in Primary Health Care program. Next Dr. Connie Coniglio described province-wide initiatives from BC Mental Health and Addiction Services. Dr. Iraj Poureslami followed by discussing health literacy interventions with immigrants/refugees. Finally, Leslie Clough described the establishment and success of Health Literacy Month in British Columbia.

Following the presentations, Dr. Trevor Hancock gave a summary of the presentations, focusing on the importance of enhancing ‘self care’ of specific populations at risk. A question-and-answer and discussion followed the presentations focusing on the role of critical health literacy to reduce health inequities, the importance of partnerships between literacy organizations and public health practitioners, and how to scale up the projects described.

The workshop successfully raised awareness about health literacy initiatives in British Columbia. Furthermore, the event provided a platform for further discussion about the role of public health practitioners in reducing social inequities through literacy and health literacy. PHABC and VCH wish to thank their partners Douglas College, the Interior Health Authority, Fraser Health Authority, Northern Health Authority, Vancouver Island Health Authority and the Provincial Health Services Authority. For further information about literacy and health literacy visit the PHABC website, the presentation slides are available online.