Collaborating Across Organizations for a Remote Area Medical Event: Providing Consumer Health Information and Assessing Health Literacy

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Objective: The University of Tennessee’s Preston Medical Library’s (PML) consumer health information service partnered with local librarians and Remote Area Medical (RAM) to increase consumer health information access as well as assess health literacy levels of RAM attendees. Founded in 1985, RAM is a non-profit organization that provides free medical, dental, and vision care to individuals in need.

Methods: Librarians contacted RAM and obtained permission to both participate in the Knoxville, TN event and conduct anonymous health literacy assessments using the Newest Vital Sign (NVS) tool. Approval was obtained from PML’s institutional IRB. An email gauging participation interest was sent to local librarians at various institutions. A Zoom meeting was then set up to discuss RAM and participant expectations. A librarian with previous experience of partnering with RAM spoke at the meeting about his experiences and answered questions. Librarians volunteered for specific times so that two people were always at the library’s information table.

Librarians represented the following institutions:

- University of Tennessee Preston Medical Library
- University of Tennessee Knoxville Libraries
- East Tennessee Children’s Hospital Library
- Lincoln Memorial University
- Pellissippi State Community College
- South College

Results: Ten librarians from six east Tennessee libraries attended the February RAM event and staffed a table with consumer health information handouts, health information request forms, and other informational materials. 137 people visited the table and 13 filled out health information request forms. Mental health was the subject area most frequently requested. Sixteen participants completed the NVS health literacy assessment tool. Results indicate that the majority of participants likely had adequate health literacy. Participants came from 11 regional zip codes, including some from outlying rural areas.

Conclusions: Participating in the RAM event allowed for collaboration with multiple institutions in the local area, further building relationships for future collaborative efforts. Through participating in the Knoxville RAM event and analyzing collected data, researchers sampled health literacy of RAM attendees and planned more focused consumer health information outreach. Two other RAM events in east Tennessee were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic; PML will participate annually in the Knoxville RAM event.

References: