Institute for Healthcare Advancement will Honor Four for Excellence in Health Literacy at National Conference

Award ceremony will be held on May 10 in Irvine, Calif.

La Habra, Calif. (PRWEB) May 06, 2013 -- The Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) will present four awards on Friday, May 10, for outstanding achievements in health literacy. The awards will be presented at its Twelfth Annual Health Literacy Conference, “Operational Solutions to Low Health Literacy,” May 8-10 at the Hyatt Regency in Irvine, Calif. The conference will be attended by over 300 professionals working in healthcare, health educators, and individuals with an interest in literacy challenges as they relate to healthcare.

IHA, a non-profit healthcare organization and a leader in the health literacy field, received nominations from the nation’s foremost health literacy authorities and researchers. Winners were selected in the categories of Research, Innovative Programs, and Published Materials.

The winners of the four 2013 IHA Health Literacy Awards are:

Research (co-winner one of two)
Canyon Ranch Institute Life Enhancement Program (CRI LEP): An evidence-based, inter-disciplinary, integrative health program that increases health literacy while preventing, diagnosing, and addressing chronic disease.
Jennifer Cabe, Executive Director & Board Member, Canyon Ranch Institute.
Awardee: Canyon Ranch Institute, a 501(c)3 public charity

Healthy lifestyle changes can be difficult to implement--this is particularly true for low-income, medically underserved populations where chronic diseases and low health literacy pose a real threat. The CRI LEP developed by Canyon Ranch Institute (CRI), is a unique intervention research program targeted towards helping individuals embrace a starting point and plan for change, while awakening one’s own sense of purpose and self-efficacy. Program participants are recruited and screened from the patient populations of CRI’s partnering health care organizations, using criteria such as high blood pressure, abnormal blood lipids, physical inactivity, obesity and Type 2 diabetes, or multiple diagnoses of chronic disease. The CRI LEP evaluates and supports the “whole person” through seven core program elements: nutrition, physical activity, behavior change, sense of purpose, integrative health, stress management and social support and follow up. The 40-hour program, available in English and Spanish, includes but is not limited to 12 three-hour facilitated participatory group sessions that provide participants with tools to make healthy changes, as well as four one-on-one sessions for one-hour each with health professionals who help participants define a personalized approach for optimal physiological, behavioral and social well-being. The CRI LEP is tailored to each community with an inter-disciplinary team of local health professionals. “We approach each person and community as equal collaborators, drawing on our respective strengths to realize a whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” stated Jennifer Cabe, Executive Director & Board Member for Canyon Ranch Institute. The CRI LEP Core Teams at local partner sites include physicians, nutritionists, exercise professionals, social workers, nurses, behavioral health specialists, pharmacists and spirituality professionals. Each member of the Core Team receives 90 hours of training from CRI to integrate their efforts as a team of professionals who can effectively deliver the CRI LEP curriculum. Evaluation results of completed CRI LEP participants show significant improvements in multiple health outcomes, behaviors and attitudes, including a 56% reduction in PHQ-9 depression scores, 44% reduction in stress, 60% reduction in ultra C-reactive protein (a marker for inflammation), 113% increase in
exercise per week and 87% increase in mentally or physically health days per month. “Our research is among the first to conclusively show that when you improve health literacy, you can also improve health outcomes,” said Cabe.

Research (co-winner two of two)
“Picture This”—mobile technology to help improve health literacy and outcomes
Dr. Christine Kennedy, Professor and Koehn Endowed Chair in Children’s Health
Awardee: University of California, San Francisco

The adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” refers to the notion that a complex idea can be conveyed with just a single image. Dr. Christine Kennedy, Professor and Koehn Endowed Chair in Children’s Health at University of California, San Francisco, investigates that idea further in her research study called, “Picture This.” “Our research investigates the possibility of leveraging mobile health (mHealth) technology to further health literacy research and practice to bridge ethnic and racial health disparities,” states Kennedy. In a world driven by technological innovation and the inherent market tendency to design for the wealthy, as opposed to diverse populations with low health literacy, “Picture This” aims to create new opportunities for mHealth technology and health literacy professionals/practitioners through the complexity of mobile health informatics by testing a new mode of visual communication for health. “Picture This” is a three phase research study in which a mobile phone application (mHealth app) is being developed and used to help health care providers promote more physical activity and less sedentary behavior among patients. In the first design phase “Picture This” recruited urban Mexican American adults, a group at risk for sedentary behavior. The research team conducted six focus groups with 42 Spanish-speaking, Latinos of Mexican descent (consumers), two focus groups within the Spanish-speaking promotoras and six in-depth interviews with nurse practitioners. Groups explored the feasibility and acceptability of a potential mHealth application using visual communication, testing multiple visual design elements including non-textual representations (e.g. icons, pictograms, animation, and videos). Results indicate a high degree of acceptability of a mHealth application with an emphasis on visual communication among consumers. Research showed that while participants in the study were likely to use their cell phone to text and make phone calls, the majority of consumers did not prefer to play games or enter competitions on their phone. “Understanding these preferences and how they differ in the U.S. population is important in developing health literacy interventions for mobile phone platforms for use among Spanish-speaking Latinos with low health literacy,” said Kennedy. “Although this study is specific to sedentary behavior and physical activity, the applicability of impacting the field of mobile health communication at large is inevitable. Visual mobile apps could be a complete game changer in the way we, as healthcare providers, share and receive knowledge, strengthen dialog with our patients and improve health outcomes,” Kennedy states.

Innovative Programs
Peer Language Navigator (PLN) Project
Rhonda Johnson and Polly Smith, Co-Chairs
Awardee: The Alaska Health Literacy Collaborative (TAHLC)

When it comes to effective communication, one style does not fit all. Every culture has its own way of saying things and its own special expressions. Never has this been more accurate than in the city of Anchorage, Alaska where the student body composition in schools is continually changing. Anchorage is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the nation, with nearly 100 languages spoken in the Anchorage School District, it has recently become a refugee resettlement city. The Anchorage Health Literacy Collaborative (TAHLC), which is co-led by the Alaska Literacy Program and the University of Alaska Anchorage Graduate Program in Public Health,
understands the effects of low health literacy, particularly in underserved areas where people who are new to the community may not even understand how or where to access healthcare and health information. As a result, they developed a Peer Language Navigator (PLN) Project. The project targets and hires people from ethnic communities who are bi-lingual and competent in English and are interested in working with health and adult education providers in developing health messages and materials that are culturally competent. PLNs play an important role helping service providers, such as the Alaska YMCA Women’s Wellness Program and Providence Community Outreach, develop culturally competent messaging that resonates with new readers. They also participate in supporting communication efforts for healthcare workshops and screening for topics such as breast and cervical cancer. As “cultural ambassadors” for the people in their community, PLNs work to promote better dialog and understanding between healthcare providers and patients. Since 2010, 19 individual PLNs have been trained through TAHLC who speak Nuer, Wolof, Spanish, Russian, Korean, Thai, Hmong, Arabic, Somali, French, Nepali, Chinese, Lao and Burmese. “We believe living in a culturally diverse community such as Anchorage gives a great opportunity to learn and share knowledge,” states Polly Smith, Co-Chair for The Alaska Health Literacy Collaborative. “The PLN project helps our community by providing culturally relevant health information and resources, as well as improving health literacy of limited English speakers.”

Published Materials

WIC Nutrition Program Handouts: “I’m 1, I’m 2, I’m 3, I’m 4”
Poppy Strote, MS, MPH, RD, Public Health Nutrition Consultant
WIC Awardee: California Department of Public Health Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program provides low-income families vouchers for healthy foods, nutrition education, and referrals to health and social services. Each month, 84 WIC local agencies within California serve close to 1.5 million participants; of these, over 780,000 are children ages one through four. Health literacy is a challenge for many of the adult WIC participants. The average WIC parent in California has not graduated from high school, and almost 40% of Spanish-speaking WIC parents have less than an eighth grade education. “With such a large percentage of our audience being parents of toddlers and preschool children, we wanted to provide WIC parents with information for their young children in an accessible, easy to understand, interactive and reader-friendly format,” stated WIC project lead and Public Health Nutrition Consultant, Poppy Strote. Following health literacy principles, WIC developed the “I’m 1, I’m 2, I’m 3, I’m 4” nutrition handout series that provides parents of young children health and nutrition information in English, Spanish and five other languages. The handouts were developed for use in for both individual and group settings, where WIC staff can use them in dialog with parents. Written at a fifth to sixth grade reading level, the handouts contain information for the four age groups, and follow the recommendations in the US Dietary Guidelines for Americans, MyPlate, and other evidence-based sources. Each handout includes a food guide, a sample menu, and information about: trusting your child to eat the right amount, family meals, healthy snacks, food safety, age-appropriate play and normal development. In addition, each handout invites the parent to create a sample menu for his/her child, mark play activities to do together, and write down a healthy change that his/her family will make. “These handouts support our parent participants by providing concrete “how to” information for good health and nutrition, that’s easy to understand and implement. The knowledge that participants gain, empowers them to be good role models, to offer healthy foods, and to trust their children to eat the right amount,” said Strote.

Low health literacy is a widespread problem. Research shows that only 12% of American adults possess the ability or health literacy to understand and use our healthcare system effectively. That’s about 1 in 10 adults. Health literacy is defined as the ability to read, understand, and act on health information to make appropriate
decisions. These decisions include understanding how to take your medicine, prepare for a medical test, sign up for health insurance, and care for yourself or a loved one’s chronic illness.

IHA is a La Habra, California-based not-for-profit organization dedicated to empowering people to better health. It is nationally recognized for its efforts in health literacy and provides healthcare information through its various publishing efforts, the Internet, and its renowned local and national education programs. For more information regarding the IHA Health Literacy Conference, the Rewrite/Redesign Service for those in healthcare or easy to read low literacy book series, please contact Michael Villaire, Chief Operating Officer, at 1-800-434-4633 ext. 202, email him at mvillaire(at)iha4health(dot)org, or visit www.iha4health.org.

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