Understanding the Intricacies of Obesity

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Understanding the Intricacies of Obesity

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Abstract
Obesity is a major health epidemic that the UD’s level 2 Intensive English Program students were interested in learning more about. We located a health document that was not appropriate for a low health literacy audience and revised it to a readability level that could be better understood and information more accessible. Often in healthcare information is difficult to comprehend, so our purpose is to change the way it is presented to further increase the IEP students’ knowledge about their health.

Method
We took an original document from the Obesity Action Coalition website. We conducted a SMOG test, a Health Literacy Load Analysis, and a Flesch-Kincaid test to determine that the document’s readability was at about a 16th-grade level. We met with the IEP students to gather how much they understood about obesity, to then change the confusing language and lower the readability level. After presenting the new brochure for additional improvements and suggestions, we further revised our brochure.

Method of Revision
We made changes to make the document more suitable for our audience. We added a BMI chart to the back of our document so that the IEP students would be able to see where they fall on the obesity scale. We were sure to use simple sentences and brief headings to limit the use of text. Also, we maximized our use of white space in relation to text and images, and relayed basic information about obesity such as causes, medical complications, nutrition, and treatments.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Document</th>
<th>Our New Document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMOG Test Results</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesch-Kincaid Test Results</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average IEP student attempting to learn about obesity from the original document would likely have a hard time understanding the information, in stark contrast with the document we created.

Conclusion
Breaking down the important information into different sections, simplifying the sentence structure, and adding informative pictures to help guide the readers, allowed us to bring the reading level down to 4th grade. We concluded how important health literacy is within healthcare and when trying to inform a targeted audience. The changes we made enabled the IEP students to better comprehend the intricacies of obesity, and because of their increased understanding of the negative health effects obesity has and based on their own calculation of body mass index, the IEP students were more likely to make healthier lifestyle choices.

This original document came from the Obesity Action Coalition website.

Problem
The original health document had too high of a readability level, making it hard for the IEP students to navigate the brochure and understand the information, essentially causing students’ health to be negatively affected. Wordy and complex sentence structure is not appropriate for our audience with low health literacy skills, therefore the purpose of the information is lost.