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Understanding Headaches: An Analysis and Revision of an Existing Health Document for Intensive English Program Students

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Abstract
Low health literacy serves as a distinct barrier for proper healthcare and affects a large portion of the U.S. population. Our team's goal was to revise a brochure created by a headache clinic in Indiana to fit the reading level and educational needs of students in UD's Intensive English Program. This project directly shows the need for health materials that are cognizant of individuals with lower health literacy.

Problem
• Health literacy is the degree to which people obtain, process, and understand basic information
• About 50% of US adults have difficulty reading common healthcare related documents
• The original brochure’s readability was too difficult for the IEP students’ 3rd - 4th grade reading level
• Our task was to revise the document so that it matched the IEP students’ health literacy levels and incorporated the information that matched their interests and culture

Methods
1. A Health Literacy Load Analysis was performed on the original text to evaluate the fundamental, scientific, cultural, and civic literacy
2. Our group made our first visit to the IEP class to find out what they already knew about headaches and what information they still wanted to know
3. We revised the original document to match the reading level and interests of the IEP students
4. A SMOG Test and Flesch-Kincaid Word Test were performed on the revised document to analyze the readability
5. During our second visit, we received feedback from the IEP students on our revised draft
6. Revisions and edits were made to the first draft
7. The final draft was presented to the IEP students

Results
• To improve the document for the IEP audience, we eliminated medical jargon, replaced original images with more culturally appropriate ones, and included natural ways to prevent and treat headaches
• Our final document had a readability score of 5.1 (fifth grade), making it much easier for the IEP students to comprehend

Final Document

Conclusion
Based on our field testing of the first draft of our brochure, we made several small changes to tailor our final brochure to the wants and needs of the IEP students. Many of our additions improved the four domains of health literacy, and we were successful in lowering the readability of our original document. Our collaborations with the IEP students allowed us to better understand the challenges that people with low health literacy often face. This project and the skills we have learned will be beneficial for future professional careers when working with low health literate populations.