

The relevance of health literacy and influenza vaccinations

Larrell L. Wilkinson, The University of Alabama at Birmingham
Bartlee C. Linton, The University of Alabama at Birmingham
Chelsi N. Reynolds, The University of Alabama at Birmingham

The purpose of this study is to assess the relationship between receiving influenza vaccine during the past year and health literacy among residents in Deep South States. Using data from 34,039 adults from the states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina aged 18 or older who participated in the 2016 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), the proportion of participants self-reporting receiving the flu vaccine and ease or difficulty with 'health literacy' measures (i.e., health information attainment, understanding advice from health professionals, understanding written health information) was assessed. Following, the bivariate independent association between flu vaccine uptake and health literacy measures were investigated. Among deep south state participants, 36% self-reported flu vaccine uptake within the past year. A significantly greater proportion participants receiving the flu vaccine also reported easiness attaining health information (36.5%) ($p < 0.0001$) and health provider advice (35.7%) ($p = 0.0072$). A significant difference in proportions were observed for understanding written health information, with 69.4% of non-vaccine recipients reported not paying attention to written health information ($p = 0.0414$). The findings of the study underscore the relevance of the Healthy People 2030 objective (IID 09) to have 70% of United States adults receive an influenza vaccination. Health education and promotion strategies such as virtual health coaching; client immunization reminder calls; community-based vaccination interventions; and stigma reduction campaigns can help foster healthier attitudes and improve health literacy in support of increasing flu vaccinations.