Introduction

- In Australia, 70% and 56% are classified as overweight or obese
- The NMHRC Guidelines encourage GPs to educate their patients on weight loss and lifestyle change. Educational resources could provide a cost effective way to reinforce verbal information and promote behaviour change.
- However, 1 in 5 have low health literacy
- Educational resources are recommended to be at a reading grade level of an 8th grader (13-16 year of with eight years of Australian education)
- Aim: to assess the readability of resources for weight management and to analyse the content of the resources.

Methods

Data collection

- Twenty-three educational resources from the waiting room of ten Sydney general practices and two clinical software packages

Readability analysis

To calculate the resources’ reading grade level, we used:
- Flesch Reading Ease
- Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level
- Fry Readability Graph
- Simplified Measure of Gobbledygook were used to calculate the resources’ reading grade level.

Content analysis

Educational resources were assessed for the presence or absence of three content elements, based on the NMHRC guidelines:
- Dietary
  - Advice to eat more of the healthy food groups
  - Limit intake of high-energy foods and drinks
  - Reduce total energy intake
- Physical activity
  - ~ 300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity
  - 150 minutes of vigorous activity
  - Combination of moderate-intensity and vigorous activity per week
- Behaviour change
  - Goal setting
  - Self-monitoring of behaviour and progress
  - Stimulus control
  - Cognitive restructuring
  - Problem solving

Results

Description of educational resources

- N= 23 weight management educational resources
- Published by commercial sources (n= 15), not for profit (n= 7), and government (n= 1)
- Published between 2004 and 2014
- Resources were focused on nutrition (n= 8), physical activity (n= 6), and general healthy lifestyle (n= 3)

Readability analysis

- Average reading grade level was for a 10th grader (9.5 ± 1.8) (Figure 1)
- Four resources had the lowest readability noted at 8th grade (no. 4, 6, 18, 21)
- Four resources had the highest readability (no. 2, 7, 11, 23)

Content analysis

- The most prevalent message found was related to the consumption of more of the healthy food groups, reduction of total energy intake, and support for behavior change
- Two resource (no. 18, 22) provided the most comprehensive information, covering all 17 weight management topics
- Inconsistent messages or lack of scientific basis were found:
  - “Diets do not work”
  - “Diets are counterproductive”
  - “Use spicy food and caffeine to reduce hunger”
  - “Slow weight loss is better than sudden weight loss”

Conclusions

Educational resources for weight management that place less demand on literacy while covering important weight management topics could provide an effective way to emphasise verbal information communicated by the GPs. However, this study suggests that educational resources used in Australian general practice fall short of this, which has implication for general practice accreditation.

Further information

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