

English-only medication labels: A public health and social justice issue

AUTHORS: Kristen Beiers-Jones*, Marius Ibuye*, Alexandra Wesenberg*, Aline Ndemeye*

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Public Health professionals, Pharmacists, students

ABSTRACT: Background: Most Oregon pharmacies send patients home with English language labels regardless of the patient's ability to read English. This increases the risk for non-English reading clients of medication misuse, errors, and decreased adherence which could potentially worsen their health leading to increased morbidity and mortality as well as increased health care costs. 23% of people living in Oregon over the age of five described their ability to understand English as “not well” and “not at all” (United States Census Bureau, 2015).

Methods: Nursing and other health students with the OHSU Interprofessional Access Network (I-CAN) program provide home visiting and care coordination for immigrants and refugees in Portland. The presentation will include data regarding impact of prescription labeling garnered from I-CAN case studies, surveys of providers and patients, interviews with pharmacists, as well as best practices in New York and California where recent laws mandate translated prescription labels and information handouts.

Conclusion: As the number of immigrants and refugees continue to grow in Oregon, it is becoming increasingly important to provide safe, effective and culturally competent health care to a diverse population. This includes providing medication bottles/information that they can read. System changes led by Oregon public health community is needed.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Participants will list several short-term and long-term consequences of English-only medication labeling.
- Participants will discuss several innovations and practices from other states and countries regarding appropriate medication labeling.
- Participants will identify the social justice issues of English-only medication labeling.
- Participants will discuss next steps for Oregon public health community to address possible system changes.

PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Kristen Beiers-Jones, MN
Faculty in Residence for I-CAN Program of OHSU
Oregon Health Sciences University School of Nursing
5038109059 | beiersjo@ohsu.edu

CO-PRESENTER(S):

Alexandra Wesenberg | wesenbea@ohsu.edu
Kristina Vongsa | vongsak@ohsu.edu