

Adolescent Health Literacy in a Special Population: Juvenile Corrections

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PURPOSE

- Measure health literacy of adolescents in grade 6 through completion of the 12th grade in a special population: juvenile corrections.
- Detect the average reading grade level of adolescents in juvenile detention facilities
- Determine if reading grade levels of participants are below their grade level
- Identify if this population has a potential for health risk behavior based on low literacy
- Enable the tailoring of health information that is provided to youth in correctional facilities to increase effectiveness of communication
- Potentially empower youth in correctional facilities to make health care decisions

BACKGROUND

- Historically, health literacy has been assessed in the adult population.
- Recently, health literacy of adolescents was addressed through the development and validation of a screening tool, REALM-TEEN or Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy-Teen, which was based on the REALM, or Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy.
- Among recommendations for further study of adolescent health literacy beyond the development of the REALM-TEEN is to account for cultural, societal, technological, and systemic differences by focusing on special populations.
- During the development of the REALM-TEEN tool, Davis et al (2006) found that there are racial and gender differences in adolescent health literacy which emphasize a need to study specific groups of adolescents in an effort to account for health disparities.

METHODS

Sample

- **Convenience sample:** 101 adolescent residents in juvenile correctional facilities in 6th grade to completion of the 12th grade
- Exclusion of non-English speaking residents
- Non-exclusion due to age, gender, ethnicity

Facility	Average Reading Level	% Below Own Grade Reading Level	#	Total in Facility
GYC	8.74	17.65	3	17
WYC	8.63	25.00	2	8
O&A	8.70	13.33	2	15
DYLC	8.00	41.18	7	17
SLVDT	8.74	20.45	9	44
Overall	8.60	22.77	23	101

Study Procedure

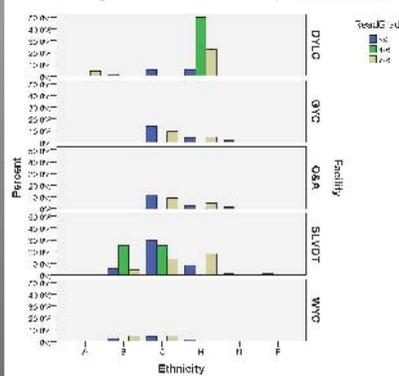
- **Screening tool:** REALM-TEEN-sixty six health related words
- Demographic survey-age, ethnicity, gender, last completed grade level
- Trained investigators administer REALM-TEEN: participating residents pronounce words contained in this questionnaire
- Dictionary pronunciation is scoring standard
- Raw score of completed questionnaires correlated to a reading-grade estimate

Analysis

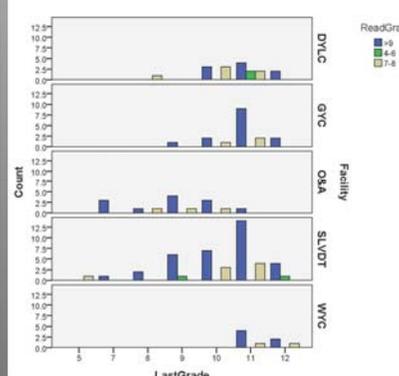
- Descriptive analysis of scores from each facility and demographic survey
- Model that predicted the current dataset the best was the one that included age, last grade completed, and ethnicity
- Statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$

RESULTS - PRELIMINARY

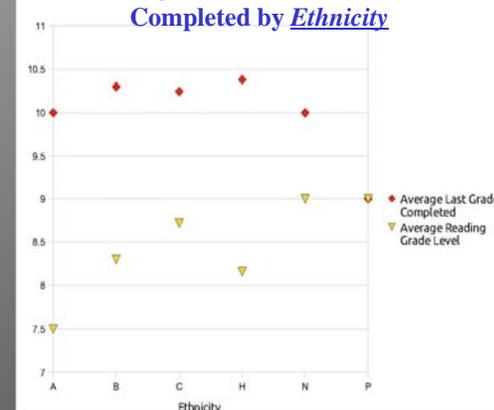
Reading Grade Level by Ethnicity



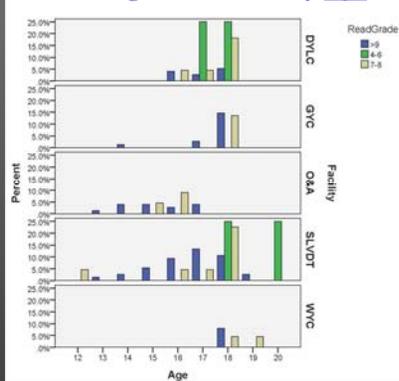
Reading Grade Level by Last Grade



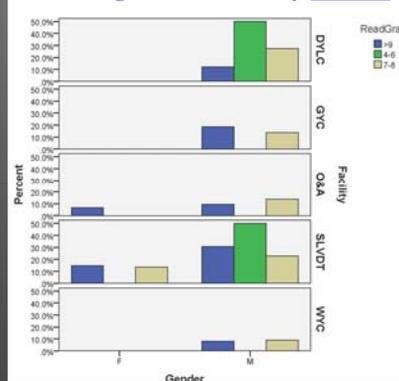
Reading Grade Level/Last Grade Completed by Ethnicity



Reading Grade Level by Age



Reading Grade Level by Gender



CONCLUSIONS / IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions

- No differences in literacy level by ethnicity
- Lower health literacy in males
- Lower health literacy at detention and long-term corrections facility which may be due to increased numbers of gang-related youth

Limitations

- Small numbers of females enrolled
- Inadequate power to compare differences between facilities

Future Implementation

- Patient/provider communication modifications will be made in both verbal and written format based on final results
- Target populations for interventions will be determined for each facility

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