Evaluating the Literacy Levels of Opioid Agreements

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Introduction

This interdisciplinary research study, facilitated by the WVU Humanities Center, brings together literacy researchers from the College of Education and Human Services and physicians from WVU Medicine to evaluate the literacy levels of opioid agreements. Also known as opioid contracts, these documents are meant to inform patients of the risks and expectations of opioids for pain management. The reading difficulty of these documents have a significant impact on a patient's ability to comprehend the associated risks, benefits, and expectations of this treatment plan. The study is guided by two research questions:

- 1. What are common themes among opioid agreements?
- 2. What readability scores are present in pain contracts?

Literature Review

- · History of opioid contracts/agreements
- The use of opioid agreements in Pain/Palliative care
 - Harm reduction
 - Risk mitigation
- Policy guidance
- · Literacy in Medicine
- Readability Formulas and Literacy Levels

Context

For the purposes of this study, a sample of six opioid agreements were selected, including the one used by WVU Medicine. The agreements are from university healthcare systems and publicly accessible. The agreements hail from a wide geographical area and provides a representation of the contents and reading difficulties of opioid agreements across the United States.



Methodology

The documents selected for this study will be analyzed for content and evaluated using readability formulas.

Content analysis is nested within the social sciences and critically evaluates themes within content. This approach includes a critical examination of text, an interpretation of the texts through either an emerging or a priori lens, and an understanding that socially constructed perspectives are brought to the text during analysis (Krippendorff, 2004).

Methodology (continued)

The review of these documents began by analyzing the WVU Medicine agreement for emerging themes. An initial list of codes was developed, these codes were applied to the other documents. After coding, the research team the codes needed to be updated. Additional codes emerged. They are in the process of being recoded using the updated code list.

The analysis will also identify excerpts for literacy level evaluation. The excerpts will be evaluated using a readability formula calculator. This will increase trustworthiness of the study by ensuring consistency across the documents.

Next Steps

The literacy levels of opioid agreements can impact the patient's interpretation and understanding. Therefore, there are serious implications for educators, patients, and healthcare providers alike.

A full manuscript is currently in development. The research team is also exploring the possibility of publishing the methodology so that it can be used for future research. Finally, the research team also hopes to present this research at Pain Week 2022: The National Conference on Pain for Frontline Practitioners held September 6-9 in Las Vegas, Nevada.



