A PARTNERSHIP IN HEALTH EDUCATION 
BETWEEN A NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL AND A COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Phyllis D. Weiner, M.D., Joseph D. Cantara, P.D., Nicetas H. Kuo, M.D., M.P.H., and James Lione, M.D.

ABSTRACT: This paper reports the results of a cooperative effort between a community teaching hospital and a neighborhood Intermediate School to promote health education in an urban setting. The liaison stemmed from the need to educate a large, multi-ethnic student population and, through it, the community. To this end, the administrative, teaching, and medical staffs of the school and hospital prepared a series of health education events designed to provide needed information. The subjects included Mental Health, Urgent Care, Personal Hygiene, Nutrition, Eating Disorders, Substance Abuse, Teenage Sexuality, Depression, Suicide, and Family Relationships.

This paper describes the results of a student questionnaire designed to measure the effectiveness of one of the programs and provide a venue for student suggestions. These suggestions were incorporated into subsequent programs.

This cost-free partnership was one of six programs chosen as being outstanding in the field of education in New York City. It was the recipient of the Council of Supervisors and Administrators Education Program Award for 1987, New York City.

INTRODUCTION

Effective education is critical to improving health care. In pursuit of this goal, extraordinary amounts of energy and money have been expended, often without reaching the desired objective. Primary care physicians are well aware of the benefits of health education. They use the well educated patient as the starting point to promote wellness through health maintenance and preventive medicine programs.

By effectively educating the public, important advances are be-
ing made in the areas of nutrition, physical fitness, mental health, accident prevention, environmental hazards, and preventable disease. Inadequately educated parents and children do pay a price in unnecessary illness. Breaking the cycle of maladaptive behavior requires educational intervention at an early age.

By beginning the health education experience in early childhood and effectively continuing through adolescence, we can begin to approach our health goals. Currently many of the health complaints of children could be prevented or ameliorated by more effective parenting which, in turn, would be achieved if our parents-to-be were better grounded in health issues. Certainly, accident prevention, toxic ingestions, child abuse, obesity, failure to thrive, behavior disorders, chronic pain syndromes and environmental hazards are on the list of problems that can be altered by awareness and education. Costly tiers of educators may not be the answer to optimal education. Clearly, restrictive school budgets close that option at the present time and make it necessary to be innovative in implementing desired programs.

In an effort to find solutions, school districts have been looking to the private sector for expertise and financial support. New York City, with its complex social fabric, poses a special challenge to educators and health care professionals. In most city schools, meaningful educational goals must be accomplished in classrooms encompassing a multiplicity of languages, cultures and values.

The Rachel L. Carson Intermediate School #237, District 25, Queens, is located in central Flushing, New York City. It is an urban school which serves students in Grades seven, eight and nine. The school has a population of approximately 1,200 students, 160 of whom are in Special Education. The student body population reflects the polyglot community in which it is situated. There are approximately 25 different languages and dialects spoken in the school; it has an ethnic distribution consisting of 43% Asian, ten percent black, 17% Hispanic and 30% others. Flushing Hospital Medical Center, located three-tenths of a mile from the school, provides health care to the community. The hospital is a teaching affiliate of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

This paper describes a successful partnership between Rachel L. Carson Intermediate School and Flushing Hospital Medical Center. School and hospital staffs participated in the development and implementation of a series of events designed to maximize the health education experience of eighth grade students in an urban, multi-ethnic community, utilizing a virtually cost-free format.