

The Science and Art of Health Behavior: Theory of Prevention

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Abstract

According to Glanz, Rimer and Viswanath (2008), “The science and art of health behavior and health education are eclectic and rapidly evolving; they reflect an amalgamation of approaches, methods, and strategies from social and health sciences, drawing on theoretical perspectives, research, practice tools of such diverse disciplines as psychology, sociology, anthropology, communications, nursing, economics, and marketing” (p. 1). The view of health education as an instrument of social change has received renewed interest in the past few years. Most recently, experts have recommended that interventions on social and behavioral factors related to health should link multiple levels of influence, including the individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, and policy levels (Smedley and Syme, 2000). The author’s current work on a health education simulation titled; Suicide Intervention Prevention focuses on a health behavior theory of prevention. Prevention theory is used to guide the framework for this simulation. Examples of causal relationships (immersion and interaction) between the characters in the simulation and the participant (player) become more meaningful and provide a unique platform to promote health education on the topic of mental health. Prevention theory enhances our work as researchers and practitioners in many ways. Theory helps us build the science of prevention by directing our hypotheses and research questions and informs the selection of appropriate populations to study. “Ultimately, theories of prevention determine intervention approaches including individual treatments, models of health care delivery, public health practice, and health policy” (Shumaker, Ockene, & Riekert, 2009, p. 4).

References

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