Presentation: e-Health collaborative learning

I. WATKINS, B. XIE. ***e-Health collaborative learning strategies for older adults.*** *Gerontechnology 2012;11(2):206;* doi:10.4017/gt.2012.11.02.379.00 **Purpose** Prior research suggests collaborative learning can be an effective strategy for adult learning. However, it remains unclear which collaborative learning strategies are effective for teaching older adults. We adapted two collaborative learning strategies (Jigsaw and constructive controversy), originally developed for younger learners, into an e-Health literacy intervention for older adults, and pilot-tested these strategies to generate preliminary data about how they might work for older adults. We selected these two collaborative learning strategies because, first, Jigsaw can adapt to teach diverse skills, making it a good candidate for teaching e-Health literacy that requires distinct, interrelated proficiencies[1]. Also, Jigsaw accommodates learners with diverse skills through interdependence[2], making it a likely effective strategy for older adult learners who are demographically diverse (age, ethnicity, etc.) and differ in computer literacy levels[3]. Similarly, constructive controversy promotes critical thinking about different perspectives[4]. Evaluating e-health websites requires the ability to think critically about different perspectives, making constructive controversy a potentially effective strategy. **Method** We conducted three two-hour sessions with 5 to 7 older adults participating in each session, and a total of 7 unique participants took part in the testing. Individual and focus-group interviews and observation were conducted during each session to identify which aspects of collaborative learning worked effectively for improving older adults' e-health literacy. **Results & Discussion** The pilot testing provided preliminary evidence that both strategies work well for older adults, but require significant structure to ensure participants follow and understand activities. Several benefits were identified. First, Jigsaw promoted peer interaction and collaboration by structuring activities so learners viewed peers as information resources. Second, constructive controversy promoted critical debate of evaluating online health resources and helped participants articulate and explore conflicting considerations. However, participants experienced difficulty staying on task at times with both strategies, necessitating additional facilitator assistance.

References

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Affiliation University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA; *E:* iwatkins@umd.edu
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Table 1. Adaptation of the collaborative learning strategies, the benefits of the strategies, and their application to teaching e-Health literacy for older adults

Collaborative strategy	Benefits	e-Health literacy application
Jigsaw	Easily adapted to teach different skills and concepts	e-health literacy requires a diverse set of skills and concepts, by using jigsaw older students don't need to learn many collaborative strategies
	Accommodates learners with diverse skills	Older adults participating in e-Health literacy interventions are diverse in terms of their demographics and computer and the Internet experience
Constructive controversy	Requires learners to think critically about different perspectives	Evaluating website quality requires older adults to think critically about web content and weigh multiple perspectives