

# Richmond Public Library (RPL) strikes again with innovative ways of increasing literacy: RPL takes an active role in YOUR Health!

By Yasmin B. Jamal.

Dace Starr from the Richmond Public Library gave a very informative session on how the library has taken an active role in building health literacy in the community at the 2011 BC Library Conference, titled "What's up Doc?"

## The Beginnings

A September 2007 Health Literacy Report from the Canadian Council of Learning pointed out that Richmond had one of the lowest health literacy rates in the country. This triggered a Public Health Forum on Health Literacy in October 2008. As a result, the Richmond Health Literacy Project was born, a partnership between Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), Richmond and Richmond Public Library (RPL).

## A Collaborative Effort

The Richmond Health Literacy Project was established to identify ways in which health care workers could contribute and promote reliable health information to support their patients to manage chronic medical conditions.

Further, in April 2009, RPL and the Patient/Family library at the Richmond Hospital added space and increased access to health related materials, both print and online.

## Marketing

Various marketing strategies were employed: Flyers, bookmarks, prescription pads (with branch libraries and phone #'s) and the health webpage at the RPL site were used to promote health materials, including websites available 24x7 from the library's home page. Physicians and health practitioners were targeted through meetings. Prominent displays at RPL in prime locations (e.g. on the way to the return shelf) were set up to attract the library users. In addition, extensive staff training on the role of the

librarian in this project, and the available resources available was also provided.

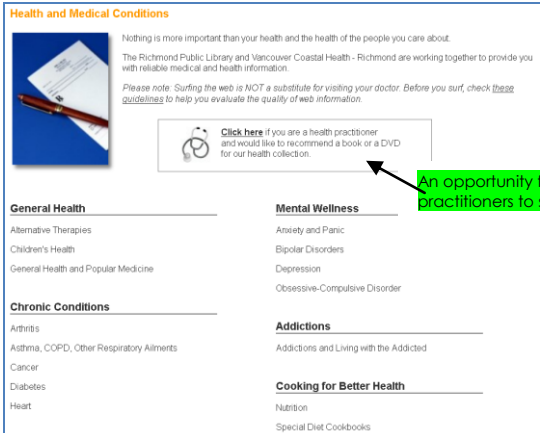
## Goals of this project

- To build the collections at both the Richmond Public Library and the hospital through recommendations from the physicians and the health care clinicians to support patients in the management of their chronic conditions.
- To help patients develop skills to access, understand, evaluate and use these health information resources that have been recommended by practitioners.

## What is in it for the libraries?

- Targeted and strong collection development, with suggestions from health practitioners.
- Promotion of library services through books and reliable websites.
- Increase in health literacy.

## The Health Literacy Website at RPL [www.yourlibrary.ca/health](http://www.yourlibrary.ca/health) was launched



A user friendly website that provides information on General Health, Mental Wellness, Addictions, Chronic Conditions, and even a link for Cooking for Better Health. Each of these links takes you to the collections of RPL, with each record displaying the details of the book and if it is available in the library or not. The RPL website also gives the practitioners an opportunity to suggest titles of books and videos online for the collection. This in turn gives them ownership in this project.

### Next Step-Evaluation of the project

How can you determine that the health literacy levels have indeed gone up? To determine this, in February, 2010, a pilot group study of patients enrolled in chronic disease management programs was formed at the Garrat Wellness Centre (a VCH chronic disease management centre). A pre- and post- test was administered using two assessment tools and a disease management knowledge skills questionnaire was also administered to find out the increase in health literacy.

### Overall Results

This project has provided a template and an avenue for future partnerships with other health practitioners, and specialized health groups, (such as dental workers, nutritionists etc.).

RPL and Richmond Hospital Library have also built an impressive collection of resources to support residents, family members and patients in managing and understanding their chronic medical conditions. Their shared mandate of a win-win situation for the customers/patients and doctors will lead to increased health literacy and strong health information resources.

As a follow up to the VCH-RPL Health Literacy Project, the Centre for Health and Community Partnerships at Douglas College is holding bi-monthly meetings to facilitate networking on topics related to health literacy and to explore potential community service learning projects. For more information, contact Marina Niks at [niksm@douglas.bc.ca](mailto:niksm@douglas.bc.ca).

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