



A Study on Heart Health Literacy in Central Appalachia

A plain-language digest of “Cardiovascular Diseases Health Literacy among Patients, Health Professionals, and Community-Based Stakeholders in a Predominantly Medically Underserved Rural Environment”

In 2018, researchers at East Tennessee State University and their community partners asked people living in the Appalachian parts of Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia 5 written questions to find out what they knew about heart disease.

WHY

Heart disease is widespread in Central Appalachia. Knowing how to find, understand, and use health information so that you can make good health decisions for yourself and others is called “health literacy”. Health literacy has a big impact on heart health. It helps prevent heart disease and makes it less likely that you will have to go to the hospital for heart disease. It also helps you live better if you have heart disease. You have a better chance of not dying from heart disease if you are informed about health.

Health literacy has a stronger effect on the health of people who live in rural areas because there are not as many doctors, hospitals, pharmacies and health services as there are in towns and cities.

GOAL

To find out:

- What do people in Central Appalachia know about heart health?
- Do older or younger people know more about heart health?
- Does it make a difference how long you went to school?

WHO PARTICIPATED

- **48 men and 31 women**
- Patients, Caregivers, Community Members, HCPs
- People who live and work in **Appalachian Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia**

WHEN

We sent out questions in 2018 and published the research in 2020.

Definitions

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)

Diseases of the heart and blood vessels, also called “heart disease”

Health Literacy (HL)

Knowing how to find, understand, and use health information so that you can make good health decisions for yourself and your loved ones

Health Care Providers (HCPs)

Doctors, dentists, pharmacists, chiropractors, clinical psychologists, optometrists, nurse practitioners, nurse-midwives, or clinical social workers

Key Numbers

Less than half of those we asked...

...gave the **right** answer to **all 5** questions

People over 50...

...were almost **4 times more likely** to have **wrong information** about physical activity and heart disease

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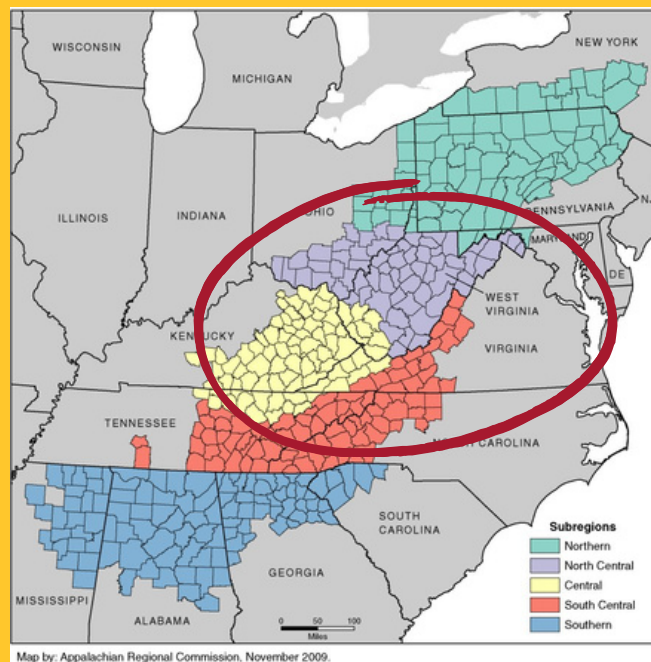
WHAT WE FOUND

- People **under 50** know **more** about heart health than those over 50, especially physical exercise and heart health.
- People with **more than a 4-year college degree** knew **more** about these 4 aspects of heart health than others:

1. stress
2. typical symptoms
3. blood pressure
4. exercise

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Healthcare and treatment should include giving patients **information about heart health**.
- We may be able to **improve health literacy** if we **improve education levels** in the region.
- We have to **teach people about heart health** after they are **hospitalized** because of heart disease.
- Doing **research with more people for a longer time** will help us make sure these **results are correct** and **learn more** about heart health literacy in the area.



Central Appalachia

Reference:

Mamudu, H. M., Wang, L., Poole, A. M., Blair, C. J., Littleton, M. A., Gregory, R., Frierson, L., Voigt, C., & Paul, T. K. (2020). Cardiovascular Diseases Health Literacy among Patients, Health Professionals, and Community-Based Stakeholders in a Predominantly Medically Underserved Rural Environment. *Southern Medical Journal*, 113(10), 508-513.