B. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Name: Developing a Novel Intervention to Improve Health Literacy among Wisconsin Latinos
HWPP Project Number: 2010D-15

Without exceeding this one (1) page, briefly describe your project and partnership.

It is well known that diabetes is a serious health problem in the US as the prevalence is high and increasing, especially among minority populations. Indeed, the prevalence of diabetes is nearly two times greater among US Latinos than in non-Latino populations. Yet as numerous studies have shown, the uptake of preventive behaviors, from improvements in diet and exercise habits to information-seeking and appointment-seeking, requires basic access to accurate and understandable information about diabetes and its risk factors, especially for minorities who bear disproportionate burdens of the disease. While many individuals from different ethnic groups can identify poor diet and lack of exercise as key risk factors for poor health in general, they may not understand the relationship between those lifestyle factors and other modifiable risk factors, such as high blood pressure and high LDL cholesterol. For example, while Latino women are more likely to be hypertensive than non-Latino white women, Mexican Americans of both genders have the lowest rates of hypertension risk awareness, treatment, and control when compared to non-Latino whites and blacks. Such evidence is intensified given that Latinos have significantly lower levels of health literacy than all other ethnic groups.

Our community-academic partnership proposes to bridge this serious divide between the Latino population and access to accurate and understandable information about diabetes risk and prevention. We plan to accomplish this goal by creating a culturally appropriate and theory-based Spanish-language teledrama with characters whose dialogue, interactions, and experiences yield accurate information and positive socio-behavioral modeling. As a newly emerging concept and field of inquiry, health literacy research utilizes a variety of measures, namely those based on comprehension of print materials (print literacy) and numeracy. The proposed study advances the field in a new direction by focusing on the development and feasibility testing of a novel intervention emphasizing speech and speech comprehension, collectively known as oral literacy. According to a health literacy study by the US Department of Health and Human Services, for adults "at all levels of health literacy, no single type of print materials was as important as non-print sources, including broadcast media such as radio or television." Indeed, as health communication researchers have shown, communication strategies that are designed to be both educational and entertaining have great potential to increase knowledge and inspire changes in attitudes, cultural norms, and behaviors, including screening behaviors. Our main outcome measure will be whether Latino participants who are exposed to a diabetes-based teledrama, a teledrama format popular throughout Latin America, will yield higher scores on post-tests of diabetes knowledge than scores obtained during the pre-test. First, using a community-based participatory research framework, we will identify and create a script with key diabetes-related health messages. Second, we will complete the production and editing of the teledrama, as well as the translation of a diabetes knowledge assessment tool in both English and Spanish. Third, we will conduct a pilot test to measure the effects of the teledrama on all outcome measures. Findings from the study will aid in the development and testing of a future randomized control trial investigating the efficacy of a serialized teledrama (numerous episodes broadcast to a large-scale sample over a longer time period) with more complex measures of program exposure, including frequency of exposure and duration.