

DEVELOPING GUIDELINES TO TRANSLATE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE IN A COMPREHENSIBLE FORMAT FOR THE PUBLIC

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INTRODUCTION

The Sexual Violence Research Initiative and the Web and Media Technologies, Medical Research Council collaborated to compile a scientific fact sheet on the link between HIV/AIDS and sexual violence. This led to the research question how one should apply audience analyses to scientific material to create a brochure for a general audience.

OBJECTIVE

To design a lay brochure explaining the link between HIV/AIDS and sexual violence using newly developed guidelines for the effective transfer of knowledge to the public.

METHODS

A combination of dual-coding theory incorporating different levels of understanding and two readability tests, Flesch-Kincaid and SMOG, were used as tools to analyse the scientific information and develop a comprehensible and visually appealing brochure. The brochure was evaluated in a survey among 45 participants to assess readability, graphical display and comprehensiveness.

Guidelines included:

Text development: Readability tests enabled calculation of desired scholastic grade levels, distinguishing between concrete and abstract information for lower (8.9) and higher (10.9) grade levels. By incorporating both grade-reading levels, the brochure catered for the public's diverse reading capabilities.

Graphical development: Incorporating pictures, charts, graphs that related to content.

Design: Font, colours, paper texture, layout, three-fold brochure to create a brochure that attracts attention, proven to have a higher recall rate.

RESULTS

Guidelines evaluation:

- 97.7% (n=44) found the brochure easy to read
- 100% (n=45) found the brochure easy to understand, and
- 88.8% (n=40) found it grasped their attention.

Lay understanding of the brochure became evident when 88.8% (n=40) understood the main message and 68.8% (n=31) could name a link between HIV and sexual violence.

CONCLUSION

Previous studies found that often lay people struggle to understand scientific health information. As shown in the results, the guidelines developed in this study bridged this obstacle.