

Patient Information Design

As part of the Institute of Medical Illustrators' (IMI) scheme for continuing professional development, worksheets will be published at regular intervals in this Journal. These are designed to provide the members of IMI with structured CPD activities that offers one way to earn credits. It is recognized that this worksheet requires some time spent undertaking the exercises. The answers to the questions, along with any notes and reflections you make or other publications you find, should be kept in your CPD portfolio.

This worksheet is based around the theme of patient information and could also be used to develop an evidence based research project.

TASK 1. WHAT MAKES A GOOD DESIGN FOR PATIENTS?

Collect a wide variety of leaflets from your hospital, a doctor's surgery, or a local chemist. If you have already designed quite a few leaflets, do not include one of your own in your selection. Review your collection and select one that you think is an example of bad design, one that is average, and one that you think is good. Write short notes for each, under the headings of strengths and weaknesses.

Try the same exercise with a number of friends or relatives; do not say which you think are good or bad designs, but ask them what they think and note their opinions for strengths and weaknesses.

Compare the answers. Did they think the same way as you, or did some things you thought bad or average appeal to them? From this exercise, create a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the selection of leaflets.

TASK 2. RESEARCH AND BACKGROUND READING

Do some further research on good design for patient information using the range of resources you have available (books, journals and the internet). On reflection, are the issues in the literature the same as you found, or different?

Suggested resources include the report on Health Literacy by the National Consumer Council,¹ the Design Research Society,² the Royal National Institute for the Blind's 'See It Right' booklet collection,³ the Design Council,⁴ and the Designers in Health Network.⁵ Books on user research include *Observing the User Experience* by Kuniavsky,⁶ and *Information Anxiety* by Wurman.⁷ There are also a number of papers from the *Journal of Audiovisual Media in Medicine*,^{8, 9, 10, 11} and other research papers that apply evidence based methods, for example, Guyatt et al.¹²

TASK 3. PRACTICE AND REFLECTION

One of the best ways to develop as a professional is through work-based learning, applying what you learn as you practice. Incorporate the principles you have learned from the first two tasks into your design work. It is always best to think in terms of a progressive development, as not all the ideas will be applicable for the next leaflet you have to design, i.e. sustained development rather than a stop/start approach.

As you try out more ideas from your research, you should record what you are doing in a reflective journal or design diary. This will become part of your CPD portfolio. The design work should also include user feedback; patient information material must convey the right message in order to be useful to patients.

TASK 4. USER RESEARCH

As you develop your design ideas and skills, you could undertake a piece of user research for publication or for a presentation. This involves taking your reflection and professional practice a stage further to disseminate your good practice as part of evidence based research, similar to the research by Finan on 'Visual literacy in images used for medical education and health promotion'.¹⁰ User testing in association

with your Health Promotion department or colleagues could be crucial for some health campaigns. A good example of the need for user feedback can be found in a presentation on diabetes websites by Kamel Boulos,¹³ and the corresponding press reports.^{14,15} Plan your user research using techniques described by Kuniavsky⁶ or those suggested by the Design Council.¹⁶

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