

# Assessing the Perceived Importance of Preparing Health Educators to Teach Adult Learners

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## Abstract

Adult learners are the primary target population in health education programs in the community, worksite and medical settings. The purpose of this study was to document the need for the incorporation of adult education principles in health education professional preparation programs and to delineate current efforts in health education programs to train future health educators in adult education. Preparing Health Educators to Teach Adult Learners survey was designed to document the need for adult education in health education and determine its role in current curriculum development. Data were collected from a nationwide random sample of health education professionals; total response rate was 58.4% (n=111). Statistical data analysis determined that health education academicians surveyed recognized an overwhelming need for the infusion of adult education principles into health education preparation programs (84.1 %, n=86). Few programs at the undergraduate or graduate levels required students to take a specific course that addressed adult education (30.8%, n=42). Statistically significant differences between undergraduate and graduate programs existed for the following variables: belief that programs currently teach health educators to prepare adults (p=0.001), infusion of adult education in health education courses (p=0.001) and extent to which adult education is taught in other educational courses (p=0.003). Based upon these findings, a major recommendation from this study would be that professional preparation programs include adult education training for future health educators and that these courses be taught by adult education professionals.