

Health literacy drives medical library program

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Healthcare workers, neighborhood leaders, family practice physicians and New Orleans youth are discovering authoritative health information thanks to a grant from the National Library of Medicine to the Rudolph Matas Library of the Health Sciences at Tulane.



Neville Prendergast, right, director of the Rudolph Matas Library of the Health Sciences, and Elaine Hicks, education librarian, are spearheading a health literacy project funded by the National Library of Medicine. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

“The library's mission to serve Tulane-affiliated patrons has expanded into the wider community to create health equity by promoting health literacy,” says [Matas library](#) director Neville Prendergast.

The National Library of Medicine's online consumer health resources, including Medline Plus, are authoritative and free, but the National Library of Medicine needs academic libraries like Tulane's to promote use of these valuable resources.

As part of their community outreach program, Matas staff demonstrated [Medline Plus](#) at a recent meeting of the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians. They will also train staff at the Louisiana Public Health Institute and Tulane's clinic at Covenant House to both use the resources for professional development and share them with the public.

The Matas library also is partnering with Dr. MarkAlain Dery, assistant professor of clinical medicine and creator of the New Orleans Society for Infectious Disease Awareness (NOSIDA), a nongovernmental organization to raise local awareness about HIV. At a NOSIDA-sponsored World AIDS Day HIV awareness concert, the library will promote authoritative HIV prevention web apps to concertgoers and the patients Dery sees at Covenant House. In addition, neighborhood leaders affiliated with the Neighborhood Partnerships Network will be trained to introduce Medline Plus to their constituents.

“Our goal is to connect the larger community to authoritative health information,” says Prendergast. “As librarians our job is to help people find the best information to meet their needs.”

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