low or no reading skills. See the Teaching: Client Care box for suggestions on how to teach clients with low literacy levels.

DIAGNOSING

Nursing diagnoses for clients with learning needs can be designated in two ways: as the client’s primary concern or problem, or as the etiology of a nursing diagnosis associated with the client’s response to health alterations or dysfunction (see Identifying Nursing Diagnoses, Outcomes, and Interventions).

Learning Need as the Diagnostic Label

The North American Nursing Diagnostic Association (NANDA) includes the following diagnostic labels appropriate to a client’s learning needs when the learning need is the primary concern:

- **Deficient Knowledge:** absence or deficiency of cognitive information related to a specific topic (NANDA, 2003, p. 109).

Whenever the diagnostic label Deficient Knowledge is used, either the client is seeking health information or the nurse has identified a learning need. The area of deficiency should always be included in the diagnosis. Following are examples using the NANDA label Deficient Knowledge as the primary concern:

- **Deficient Knowledge (Low-Calorie Diet)** related to inexperience with newly ordered therapy.
- **Deficient Knowledge (Home Safety Hazards)** related to denial of declining health and lack of interest in learning.

Wilkinson (2000) stresses that if Deficient Knowledge is used as the primary concern, one client goal must be “client will acquire knowledge about . . .”. The nurse needs to provide the information that will change the client’s behavior rather than focus on the behaviors caused by the client’s lack of knowledge.

A second nursing diagnostic label where a learning need may be the primary concern is

- **Health Seeking Behavior:** active seeking (by a person in stable health) of ways to alter personal health habits and/or the environment in order to move toward a higher level of health (NANDA, 2003, p. 88).

When this diagnostic label is used, the client is seeking health information; the client may or may not have an altered response or dysfunction at the time but may be seeking information to improve health or prevent illness. This diagnosis is especially appropriate for clients attending community health education programs. The following are examples using the NANDA label Health Seeking Behavior as the primary concern:

- **Health Seeking Behavior (Exercise and Activity)** related to desire to improve health behaviors and decrease risk of heart disease. This diagnosis may be appropriate for the client who has identified a personal health risk for a cardiac condition and wants to minimize that risk through exercise.
- **Health Seeking Behavior (Home Safety Hazards)** related to desire to minimize risk of injury. This diagnosis may be appropriate for parents of a toddler who are seeking information to ensure that their home is safe for their child. The diagnosis might also be used when an adult child seeks

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**Teaching Clients with Low Literacy Levels**

- Emphasize key points in simple terms and provide examples.
- Limit the amount of information in a single teaching session. Instead of one long session with a great deal of information, it is better to have more frequent sessions with a major point at each session.
- Reinforce information through repetition.
- Obtain feedback: Ask the client specific questions about the information presented or ask the client to repeat it in his own words.
- Associate new information with something the client already knows and/or associates with her job or lifestyle.
- Avoid handouts with many pages and classroom lecture format with a large group.

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**Teaching: Client Care**

**Developing Written Teaching Aids**

- Keep language level at or below the fifth-grade level.
- Use active, not passive, voice.
- Use easy, common words of one or two syllables (e.g., use instead of utilize or give instead of administer).
- Use a large type size (14 to 16 point).
- Write short sentences.
- Place priority information first.
- Use pictures, drawings, or cartoons, if appropriate.
- Leave plenty of white space.
- Obtain feedback from nurses and clients.


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