

H **Health Literacy** **A**
The Road to Improved Health Outcomes

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“Health Literacy is defined as the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.”

Healthy People 2010

The diagram features a central circle labeled "Health Literacy". Two large, light-gray arrows point towards each other, meeting at the circle. The left arrow is labeled "Skills/Ability Of Individuals" and the right arrow is labeled "Demands/Complexity of Health Information and System".

“Effective communication is a cornerstone of patient safety.”

-The Joint Commission

Scope of the Problem

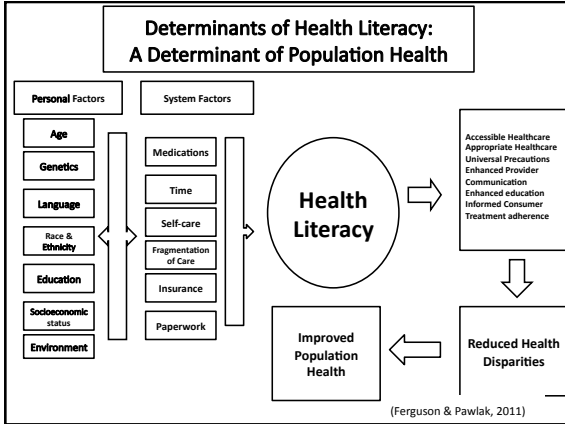
- “Only 12 percent of America’s 228 million adults have the skills to manage their own health care proficiently.” AHRQ, 2008
- 47 Percent or 90 million adults have difficulty locating, matching, & integrating information in written texts with accuracy and consistency. IGM, 2004

Who Is At Risk?

- Elderly
- Poor
- Ethnic and cultural minorities
- Less than High School diploma or GED
- Physical or mental disabilities
- Immigrants
- Prisoners
- Homeless
- Military Recruits

Consequences

- Lower use of preventative services
- Delayed diagnoses
- Poor adherence to treatment regimens
- Increased hospitalizations
- Increased morbidity and mortality
- Poor health outcomes



Assessment of Health Literacy

- REALM – Rapid Estimate of Adult Health Literacy in Medicine
- TOFHLA – Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults
- NVS – Newest Vital Sign

“Universal Precautions”

AHRQ Toolkit for Improving Health Literacy in Primary Care

- 4 Key Drivers of Care for Health Literacy
 - Universal Precautions
 - Effective Oral Communication
 - Teach Back – Return Demonstration
 - Use of videos
 - Effective Written Communication
 - Self-Management and Empowerment
 - Supportive Systems

Innovations to Improve Health Literacy

- Patient Navigator
- Multimedia
- Video Technology

Video/DVDs

- Assist with decision making
- Reduce anxiety about procedures
- Teaching self-care practices

• (Krouse, 2001)

Effective Video/DVDs

- Viewing time
- Behavior focus
- Interaction
- Socioeconomically & culturally sensitive
- Avoid medical jargon
- Limit content
- Chunking

(Adapted from Doak, Doak & Root, 1996)

Features of a Good Handout

- Use pictures
- Link pictures with text
- Focus on central message
- Emphasize key points by highlighting, coloring, or underlining text
- Use lots of white space
- Use fonts size 12 or larger

(Doak, Doak & Root, 1996)

Barriers

- Lack of available Health Literacy sensitive videos
- Cost of production
- Patient and staff acceptance

Practice Strategies

- Universal Precautions
- Educational materials written at the 5-6th grade level or below
- Ask Me 3
 - “What is my main problem?”
 - “What do I need to do?”
 - “Why is this important for me to do?”
- Teach Back
 - Patient repeats or demonstrates what they have been taught

Practice Strategies - Continued

- Hand materials to patients upside down
- Write reason for medication on prescription
 - E.g. HCTZ 25 mg for high blood pressure
- Use of video or multimedia technology to enhance patient understanding and decision making

Medication Reconciliation

- Reviewing current RX & OTC drugs
- ICD-9 (V58.69)

Navigating the Healthcare System

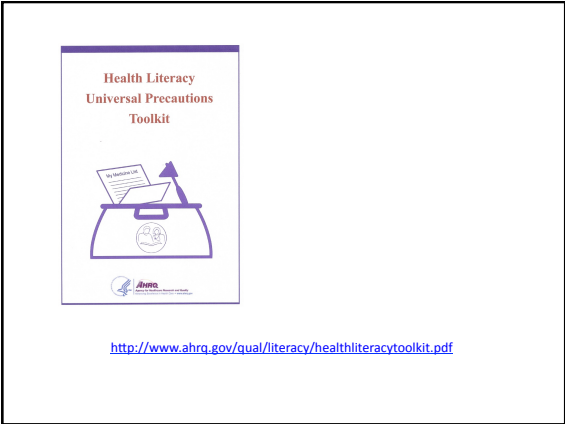
- Use maps to other providers
- Provide written explanation for referral
- Include current list of medications

Health Policy Implications

- Teach Health literacy skills
 - Schools
 - Workplace
- Provider reimbursement for patient education
- Simpler, streamlined & standardized health care systems
- Additional resources to target at risk populations

Health Literacy Resources

- Online course in Health Literacy
 - www.hrsa.gov/healthliteracy/training.htm
- Guide for developing print materials
 - www.nci.nih.gov/aboutnci/oc/clear-and-simple/page1
- Health Literacy Listserv
 - www.nifi.gov/linc/discussions/discussions.html
- Online readability calculator
 - www.wordscount.info
- Health Literacy Resource Guide
 - <http://amerihealthmercy.com/pdf/newsroom/press/health-literacy-guide.pdf>
- Plain language thesaurus
 - www.nphic.org/files/editor/file/thesaurus_1007.pdf
- Health Literacy Translations Toolkit
 - www.hablamosjuntos.org/mtw/default.toolkit.asp



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- Ferguson, L. A. & Pawlak, R. (2011). Health literacy: The road to improved health outcomes. *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners*, 7, 123-129.
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Conclusion

- Only 12 percent of America’s 228 million adults have the skills to manage their own health care proficiently
- Health Literacy impacts all aspects of care where patients make decisions
- Improving health literacy translates into improvement in health outcomes
