

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and Aspirus Wausau Hospital, WI

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# Low Health Literacy among Paid Caregivers of Seniors

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As seniors age, physical and cognitive challenges increase.



When a senior no longer can independently live at home, the options are to:

1. Move in with family/ friends
2. Move into Independent or Assisted Living Facilities
3. Move into Nursing Homes

OR

4. Remain in their home, and pay a caregiver/ helper to assist with their needs.
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# Paid Caregivers

*Personal care attendants, private duty attendants, personal care assistants, home care aides, personal companions, sitters, or homemakers.*

Paid caregivers are individuals who receive payment to directly assist a person in their daily self-care activities primarily within the person's place of residence.



# Study Question:

Since very little is known about paid caregivers,

What are their job duties/ daily responsibilities?

How many have low health literacy?

How many who have low health literacy perform health-related activities?

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# Study Population

- 98 Paid caregivers who provided care for seniors (>65 yrs)
  - Recruited through multiple strategies and sites
    - physician and nurse referral, caregiver word-of-mouth, flyers senior centers, shopping malls, local parks, lobbies of senior apartments, caregiver agency meetings)
  - Face-to face confidential interviews
  - \$20 cash compensation upon interview completion
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# Interview

Demographic questions

Characteristics of senior clients

Pay and Perceived Fairness of Pay

Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults (TOFHHLA).

Medication dispensing knowledge test

- mock-up pill bottles whose labels mimicked a nationwide chain pharmacy with obscure drugs.



# Results



Table 1: Characteristics of Paid Unrelated Caregivers (n=98)	
<b>Mean Age (range)</b>	49.5 yrs (18 – 69)
<b>Female</b>	86.7% (85)
<b>Country of Origin</b>	
USA	37.8% (37)
Philippines	33.6% (33)
Mexico	19.4% (19)
No Family Support in USA	54.1% (53)
No Family Support Locally	60.2% (59)
<b>Education Level</b>	
Less than 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	12.2% (12)
High School graduate	26.5% (26)
Some Vocat or College	43.9% (43)
College Graduate	17.3% (17)
<b>Hired by</b>	
Agency	63.3% (62)
Family Member of Senior	22.4% (22)
Senior	11.2% (11)

<b>Salary decided on by</b>	
Agency initially	63.3% (62)
Senior or Relative	18.3% (18)
“Standard Rate” of caregivers	18.4% (18)
<b>Average Hourly Pay</b>	\$8.91
-non 24 hour caregiver (n=43)	\$10.21 (6-17)
-24 hour caregiver (n=21)	\$6.55 (1-14)
<b>Under Minimum Wage (\$7.75)</b>	27.4% (26)
<b>Fairness of Salary for Services</b>	
Definitely Fair	6.1% (6)
Probably Fair	8.2% (8)
Fair	39.8% (39)
Unfair	45.9% (45)



# 35.7% of Paid Caregivers had Inadequate Health Literacy

Responsibilities Performed by Caregivers	
Activity	More than half or All of the time
<b>Medicine related</b>	
Getting medications from pharmacy	53.1% (52)
Reminding senior to take meds	73.5% (72)
Handing senior medications	53.1% (52)
<b>Doctor Appointments</b>	
Scheduling Doctor Appt.	49.0% (48)
Transporting Senior to Appt.	66.3% (65)
Seeing Doctor with Senior	68.4% (67)

Health-related Responsibilities of Caregivers by Health Literacy Level			
Activity	Adequate Health Literacy (n=63)	Inadequate Health Literacy (n=35)	P value
More than half or all Medication Tasks	82.5% (40)	91.4% (32)	.228
Seeing Doctor with Seniors at Appts	74.6% (47)	82.9% (29)	.348





**Table 4: Medication Dispensing Knowledge Correct Responses (n=98)**

<b>Medication</b>	<b>Adequate Health Literacy (n=63)</b>	<b>Inadequate Health Literacy (n=35)</b>	<b>P value</b>
Migrlitol 25mg Three Times Daily with Meals	87.3% (55)	62.9% (22)	.005*
Pyrantel 125mg Take 6 Tablets Daily for 3 days	42.9% (27)	34.3% (12)	.406
Paliperidone 3mg Take One Daily	98.4% (62)	82.9% (29)	.004*
Zopiclone 7.5mg Take 1 Tablet Nightly as needed	68.3% (43)	62.9% (22)	.609
Cephalothin 500mg Three Times Daily X 10 days	87.3% (55)	65.7% (23)	.011*

\* Significant p<0.05



# Next question

63% Paid Caregivers were hired through an agency

What are agencies doing to ensure employees are capable of being caregivers?

What sort of screening processes do agencies perform prior to hiring caregivers?

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# Hiring and Training Processes of Agencies Providing Caregivers to Seniors

- IRB Exempt
  - Telephone interviews were conducted with interviewers posing as prospective clients obtaining information on caregivers for a senior with dementia.
    - Agencies were queried about their hiring practices, training, supervision, services provided as well as fee schedules.
  - Caregiver agencies were identified in the Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago, Indianapolis, Palm Beach, Phoenix, and St. Louis areas
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# Results

**TABLE 1: CAREGIVER SCREENING (n=183)**

<b>Performed any type of screening</b>	100%
<b>Criminal Background</b> State level	98%
Federal level	53%
<b>Drug Screening</b> At time of hire	10%
Random	6%
<b>English Fluency</b> “Assessed during interview”	86%
<b>Health Literacy</b>	0%
<b>Educational Background</b>	
Verifies all claimed education	4%
Certifications or licenses only	23%
<b>Other*</b>	
Phoning references	100%
Checking driving records	30%
Proof of auto insurance	4%
Credit check	5%

\*Agencies also stated that they perform an

- “Elder abuse record check”

- “National caregiver background check”

# Agencies promised caregivers were:



Able to perform health related tasks including medication reminders (100%) and medication dispensing (49%)  
Accompanying senior to physician appointments (100%).

Several agencies required CPR training (27%) and 3 agencies provided training. Interestingly, one agency stated that “some caregivers have CPR training but they are not permitted by law to perform it.”

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**TABLE 3: Average Agency Fees Compared to Average Caregiver Compensation**

	<b>Agency Fee</b>	<b>Caregiver Compensation*</b>	<b>Fee Minus Compensation</b>
<b>Hourly rates</b>	\$19.31 (\$12-\$28) (n = 88)	\$10.60 (\$6-\$14) (n = 76)	\$8.71
<b>Daily rates</b>	\$207.72 (\$99-\$552) (n = 87)	\$121.43 (\$115-\$135) [Hourly \$5.05] (n=14)	\$86.29

From prior study

<b>Average Hourly Pay</b>	
- non 24 hour caregiver (n=43)	\$10.21 (6-17)
- 24 hour caregiver (n=21)	\$6.55 (1-14)



**Several Agencies are interested in  
providing Health Literacy education  
for Paid Caregivers....**



# Educational Health Literacy Programs at Aspirus...

- Aspirus serves 14 Wisconsin counties and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan
- 40 clinics, home health and hospice care, 5 hospitals including Level II Trauma Center
- Over 5,000 employees







# Questions About Medications?

## Do you . . .

- Have trouble organizing and understanding your medications?
- Get your medications by mail order or from more than one pharmacy?
- Take more than 4 medications or have multiple health conditions?
- Want to reduce your medication expenses?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, or just would like to better understand your medications ... [this program is for you.](#)

## Medication Mondays

3rd Monday of every month



Aspirus Pharmacy Staff offer this **free** one-to-one medication consultation as a community service.

Call the Aspirus Information Center at  
715.847.2380 or 1.800.847.4707  
to set up your 20-minute appointment.



# Aspirus Health Literacy Ambassador Program



- Aspirus Volunteers
- Marathon County Literacy Students & Tutors
- NTC Community College Initiative Program (Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Poland)
- 1 Clinical Staff & me
- Monthly



Feedback from readers is by far the most effective assessment tool for readability and communication improvements.

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## Dr Joseph F Smith Medical Library



[Literacy Home](#) | [Library Home](#) | [Email Library](#) | [Affiliates](#) | [Aspirus](#) | [Magnet](#) | [Yahoo](#) | [Google](#)

Articles

Ask Questions!

Aspirus Initiatives

Assessment Tools

Community

Easy to Understand

Interventions

Plain Language

Readability Tools

Teach-back

Videos, Podcast

Wisconsin Reports

### Ask Questions!

[Ask Me 3](#) promotes three simple, but essential, questions and answers for every healthcare interaction.

- [Ask Me 3 \(English\)](#)
- [Ask Me 3 \(Spanish\)](#)
- Ask Me 3 (Hmong) is available in Library

[Speak Up!](#) encourages patients to speak up if they have questions or concerns about their healthcare.

[AHRO Questions are The Answer](#) encourages patients to get more involved with their healthcare by asking questions, talking to their clinician, and understanding their health condition.

- [Questions Are the Answer - Resources](#)
- [Questions Are the Answer - Build Your Question List](#)

[Patient Activation](#) refers to a person's ability and willingness to take on the role of managing their health and healthcare. Judith H. Hibbard, Peter J.





# Geriatric Health Literacy Classes

Geriatric Health Literacy - GRN (Geriatric Resource Nurse) and GRA (Geriatric Resource Aide) classes.

**Part 1:** What is health literacy, statistics, definition, socioeconomic, impact, etc.

**Part 2:** What tools do we have? Literacy tools (Newest Vital Sign, REALM, TOFHLA), Communication techniques (Ask Me 3, JC Speak Up, PAM), barriers, Plain language, Teach-back, Readability tools (SMOG, FRY, Flesch-Kincaid), pictures/images, etc.

**Part 3:** What are we doing now? Medications, Diabetes, Pre-op and post-op education, etc. Share stories ...

**Part 4:** Do they want to help? ... tailor these classes

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# Elderspeak

In all of the Health Literacy Classes that we offer, we discuss plain language AND elderspeak

What is elderspeak ...

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# Elderspeak

It is a style which is assumed to accommodate the **perceived communication needs** of elderly people.

The fundamental assumption behind elderspeak is that the elderly are cognitively impaired, and thus need some "help".

- Infantilizing speech
- Overly caring but controlling tone of voice
- Tendency to treat the person in a childlike manner
- Slow speech pattern, simplistic vocabulary and grammar
- Short sentences, repetition
- Elevated pitch and volume
- Singsong-type tone
- Using terms like “honey,” “dear,” and “sweetie”

Becca Levy, Yale School of Public Health; Herman RE, Williams Kristine N. Elderspeak’s Influence on Receptiveness to Care: Focus on Behavioral Events. *Am J Alzheimers Dis Other Demen.* 2009 Oct-Nov;24(5):417-23.

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# Elderspeak - consequences

Patients were more likely to resist care after they were spoken to using elderspeak

- More crying out, turning away, more hitting, grabbing and kicking
- Pulling their limbs tightly toward the body
- Performed worse on memory and balance tests
- Showed higher levels of stress
- Less cooperative or receptive to care

Providers and caregivers often think

- Conveying care plus easier to understand
- Rises with the perceived level of infirmity in the patient



# Aspirus Initiatives

## 2007

- Wisconsin Health Literacy Summit (our beginning)
- Aspirus Health Literacy Council
- Health Literacy website

## 2008 - 2010

- Medication Mondays
- Aspirus Health Literacy Ambassador Program
- Many health literacy presentations to Aspirus and community members
- GRN (Geriatric Resource Nurse) and GRA (Geriatric Resource Aide) classes
- Health Literacy Tracers (Walk-In Clinic)

## 2010 - 2011

- Pre-op and post-op education
  - Health Literacy Tracers (Hospital)
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# Thank you!

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