

Health Literacy 101

An Introduction to Literacy,
Health Literacy and How They Impact
Health and Health Care

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Topics today

- General literacy and health literacy information
- Why it matters
- How to get started



What is Literacy?

National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL 2003)

“Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.”

What is Literacy?

- Literacy is a combination of skills:
 - Verbal
 - Listening
 - Writing
 - Reading

More than just reading grade level

■ **Prose Literacy**

- Written text like instructions or newspaper article

■ **Document literacy**

- Short forms or graphically displayed information found in everyday life

■ **Quantitative Literacy**

- Arithmetic using numbers imbedded in print

What is Health Literacy?

The Institute of Medicine 2004

“The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic information and services needed to make appropriate decisions regarding their health.”

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Literacy VS Health Literacy

- Almost everyone will have difficulty with health literacy at some point.
- Much harder for those that do not:
 - Read very well.
 - Speak English as their primary language.

Two Sides to the Equation

- It's all about effective communication
 - Verbal
 - Written
 - Multi-media
- It has to be presented in a way that is understandable to most people.

In Their Own Words



2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

- Data released 12/05
- ~17,000 people participated
- Over age 15
- Living in households and prisons

2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

- 4 categories of literacy
 - Below basic
 - Basic
 - Intermediate
 - Proficient

2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

- Below Basic literacy – one piece of information
- Can:
 - Sign name on a document
 - Identify a country in a short article
 - Total a bank deposit slip

2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

- Below Basic literacy – one piece of information
- Cannot:
 - Enter information on a social security card application
 - Locate an intersection on street map
 - Calculate the total cost on an order form

2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

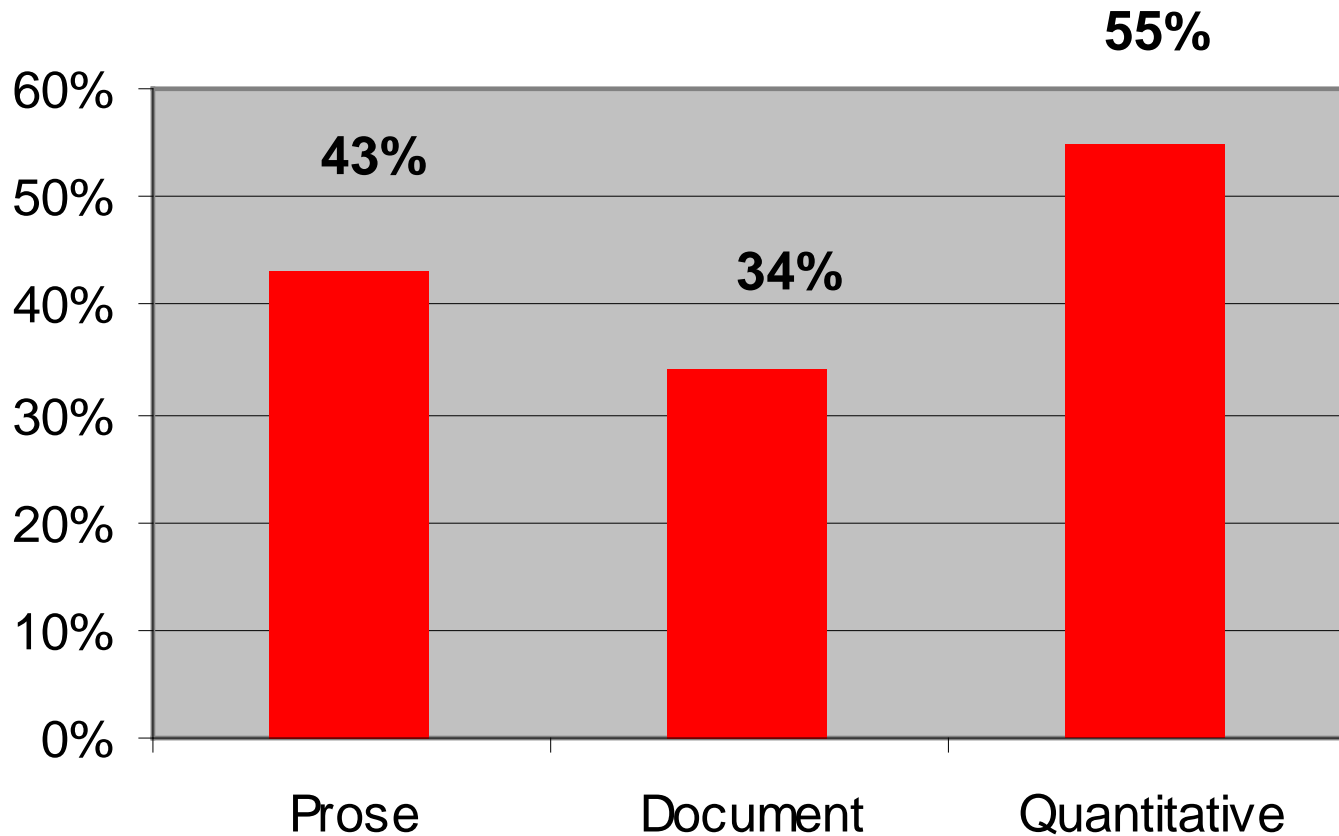
- Basic literacy – two related pieces of information
- Can:
 - Identify YTD gross pay on a paycheck
 - Determine price difference between tickets for 2 shows

2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

- Basic literacy – two related pieces of information
- Cannot:
 - Use a bus schedule
 - Balance a check book
 - Write a short letter explaining error on a credit card bill

2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

34-55% of adults are at below basic and basic literacy levels



2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

- NAAL health literacy assessment
- 28 questions specifically related to health
 - 3 clinical
 - 14 prevention
 - 11 system navigation

NAAL Health Literacy Assessment

- Entire population

- **Proficient** **12%**

- Intermediate 53%

- Basic 22%

- Below basic 14%

NAAL Health Literacy Assessment

- Basic and Below Basic Health Literacy
 - Entire population 36%
 - White 28%
 - Native Americans 48%
 - Blacks 58%
 - Hispanics 66%

NAAL Health Literacy Assessment

- Basic and Below Basic Health Literacy

- Age 16-64 28-34%

- Age 65+ 59%

NAAL Health Literacy Assessment

- Basic and Below Basic by education level
 - In High School, GED or HS grad 34-37%
 - Less than/some High School 76%

NAAL Health Literacy Assessment

- Basic and Below Basic by Self-reported health status

■ Excellent	25%
■ Very Good	28%
■ Good	43%
■ Fair	63%
■ Poor	69%

The Impact of Low Literacy on Health

- Poorer health knowledge
- Poorer health status
- Higher mortality

The Impact of Low Literacy on Health

- Increased hospital use
- Increased Emergency Department use
- Mixed results for:
 - Use of preventive services
 - Chronic health care
 - Tobacco use

Poorer Health Knowledge

- Understanding prescription labels
 - 395 patients
 - 19% low literacy (6th grade or less)
 - 29% marginal literacy (7-8th grade)
 - 52% adequate literacy (9th grade and over)
 - 5 prescription bottles

Poorer Health Knowledge

- At least one incorrect
 - 63% low literacy
 - 51% marginal literacy
 - 38% adequate literacy

Poorer Health Knowledge

“Take two tablets twice daily”

Stated correctly

Demonstrated correctly

71%

low literacy

35%

84%

marginal literacy

63%

89%

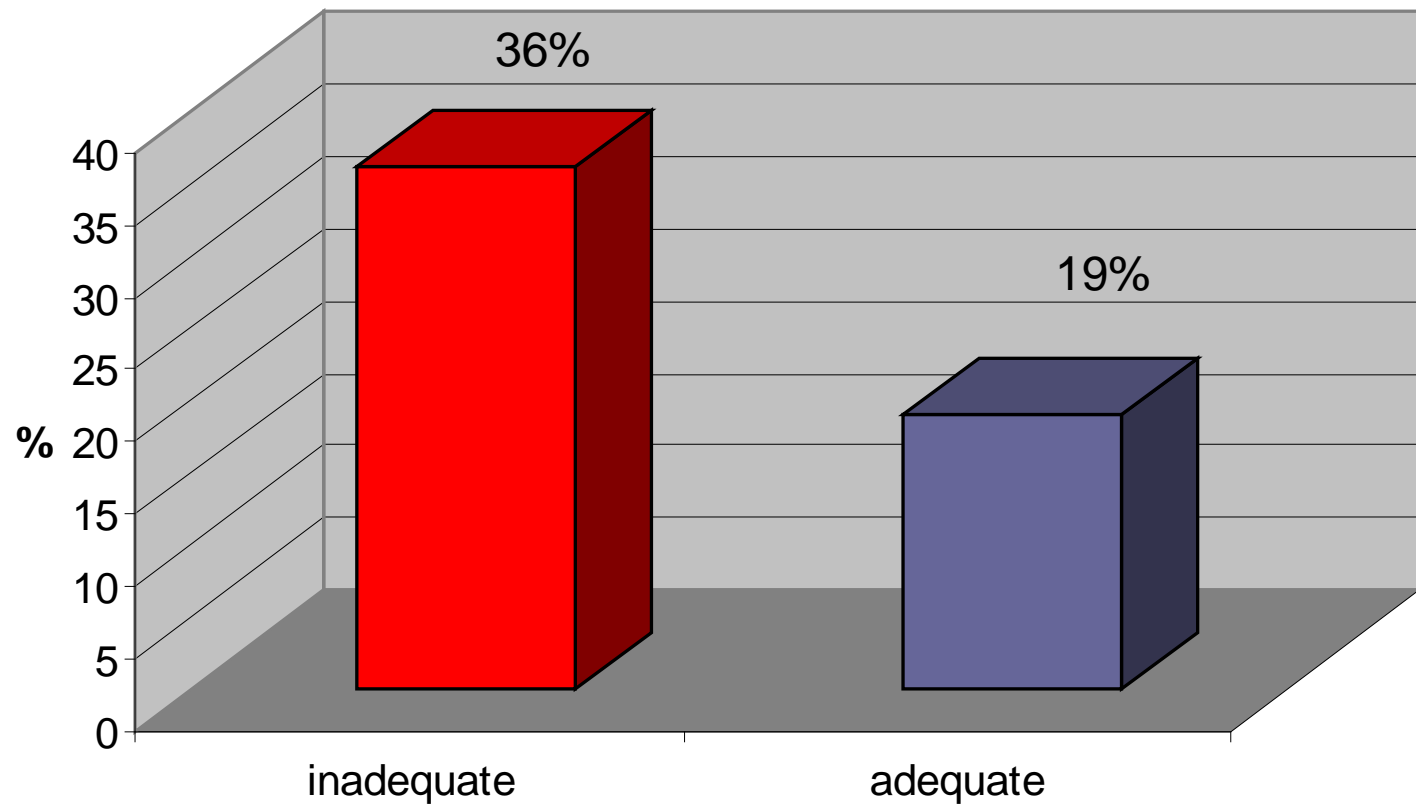
adequate literacy

80%

“Show me how many pills you would take in one day.” Counted out 4 tablets-correct

Poorer Health Status

Diabetics with retinopathy



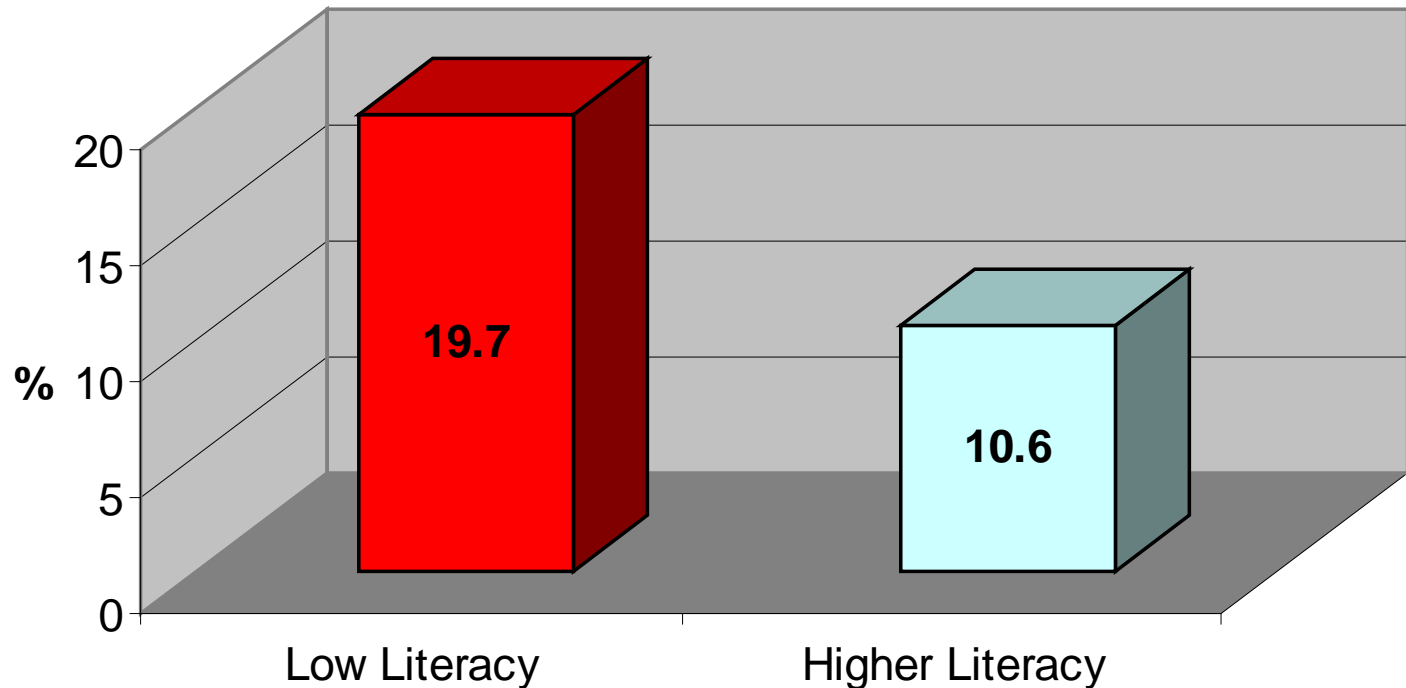
Increased Mortality

- Age 70-79
- 2512 participants
- Reading level 8th grade or less
- Five Year Prospective Study

Increased Mortality

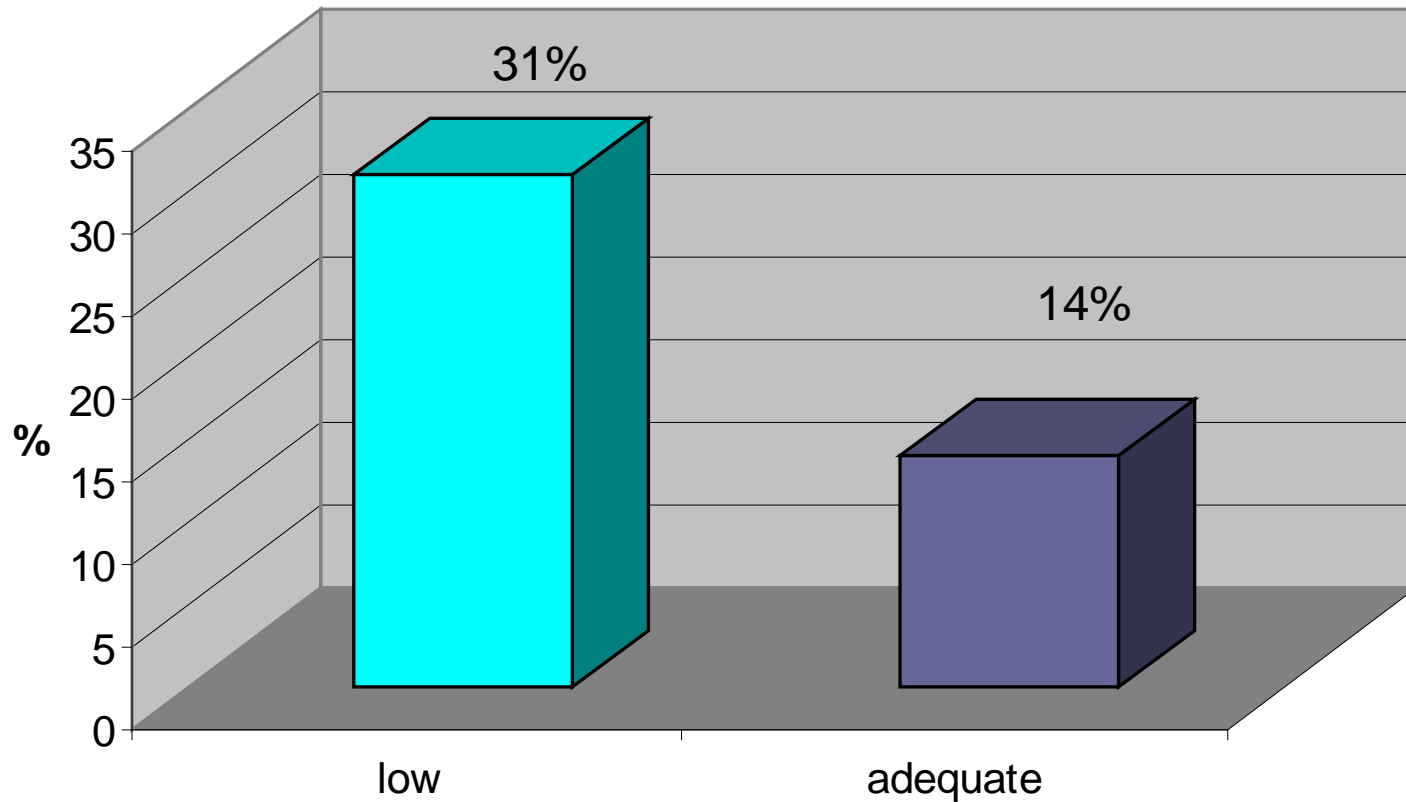
Risk of Death

Hazard ratio: 1.75



More Hospitalizations

2 year hospitalization rate
for patients visiting ED



Low Literacy is Overlooked

- Patients do not volunteer their literacy problem
 - Many are ashamed
 - Some do not recognize their inadequate literacy
 - Lack of trust

The Big Secret

- % of low literate adults that have not told their:

Children	52%
Friends	62%
Spouse	68%
Health care providers	75%
Co-workers	85%

More likely to have Low Literacy

- Older
- Less education
- Non-white

More likely to have Low Literacy

- Immigrants

- Immigrate after age 12 >50%

- Below Basic literacy level

More likely to have Low Literacy

- Low-income
- Medical Assistance
- Incarceration

You Can't Tell by Looking

- Many below basic people don't fit the stereotypes
 - 75 % born in USA
 - 50% are white
 - 40% hold full or part time jobs

A New Cause for Non-Compliance?

- Medications
- No-shows
 - Testing
 - Referral



Questions?

Where do we go from here?

Vision:

Every patient or their caregiver

understands what the problem is, what to do about it and why it's important.

How do we get there?

- Education
- Effective Communication
- Universal Design
 - If it works for people with limited literacy or limited English skills, it will work for everyone.

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

- Released May 27, 2010
- Seven goals
 1. Develop and disseminate health and safety information that is accurate, accessible, and actionable.

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

2. Promote changes in the health care system that improve health information, communication, informed decision making, and access to health services.

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

3. Incorporate accurate, standards-based, and developmentally appropriate health and science information and curricula in child care and education through the university level.

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

4. Support and expand local efforts to provide adult education, English language instruction, and culturally and linguistically appropriate health information services in the community.

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

5. Build partnerships, develop guidance, and change policies.

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

6. Increase basic research and the development, implementation, and evaluation of practices and interventions to improve health literacy.

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

7. Increase the dissemination and use of evidence-based health literacy practices and interventions.

Accurate, Accessible, Actionable Information

- Today

- 3:00 PM Working with interpreters*
- 3:00 PM Easy-to read materials*
 - MedlinePlus

Accurate, Accessible, Actionable Information

- Today

- 3:00 PM Missouri HL Library*

- 3:45 PM Readability and suitability

- Evaluating patient education materials

Accurate, Accessible, Actionable Information

- Today
 - 3:45 PM Beyond PowerPoint
 - Interactive presentations
 - 3:45 PM Multimedia and Immigrant health *
 - Community story telling

Accurate, Accessible, Actionable Information

- Tomorrow
 - 10:45 AM Improving medication safety*
 - 1:15 PM Health literacy resources*
 - 2:00 PM Teach back technique*

Accurate, Accessible, Actionable Information

■ Tomorrow

- 2:00 PM What to do When Your Child Gets Sick*
- 2:00 PM Engaging design strategies*
 - Health materials development
- 2:00 PM Materials in multiple languages

Change the Health Care System

- Today
 - 3:45 PM Teaching health professionals*
 - 3:45 PM Sustaining HL initiatives*
 - Hospital experience improving quality and patient safety through effective communication

Change the Health Care System

- Tomorrow

- 9:35 AM Joint Commission standards*

- 1:15 PM Hospital change strategies*

- Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

Change the Health Care System

■ Tomorrow

- 1:15 PM Paid senior caregivers
 - Education program for low HL caregivers
- 2:00 PM Disseminating HL messages*
 - Health Literacy Missouri News Service

Change the Health Care System

- Tomorrow

- 2:45 PM Multidisciplinary oral health
- 2:45 PM Motivational interviewing
 - Personalized method of behavior change

Adult Education and English Language Instruction

- Today

- 3:00 PM Staying healthy: ESOL curriculum*

- Tomorrow

- 2:00 PM What to do When Your Child Gets Sick*

Build Partnerships

- Today
 - Now – Health and literacy organizations*
 - Riffenburgh and Cordell
 - 3:45 – Health and literacy organizations*
 - Collaborating for clear communication

Build Partnerships

■ Tomorrow

- 1:15 PM Free clinic and literacy services*
 - Rochester Minnesota
- 2:00 PM Hospital and literacy organization*
 - English for Health, Madison

Build Partnerships

- Tomorrow
 - 2:00 PM Engaging design strategies*
 - Health materials development – with patients
 - 2:45 PM Tapping adult education expertise*
 - 4 successful programs

Change Policy

■ Tomorrow

- 10:45 AM HL and health care reform*
 - Kavita Patel
- 2:45 PM 15 ways to influence policy*
 - Doug Seubert, health communications
 - Dave Anderson, District Director,
US Representative Sean Duffy

Research and Program Evaluation

- Today
 - Now – Canyon Ranch Institute*
 - Andrew Pleasant- Time to talk cardio
 - 3:00 PM Wisconsin Ask Me 3

Research and Program Evaluation

- Tomorrow
 - 9:35 AM Health literacy measurement*
 - Andrew Pleasant
 - 10:45 PM Medication safety*
 - Michael Wolf

Research and Program Evaluation

- Tomorrow
 - 1:15 PM Paid senior caregivers
 - Education program for low HL caregivers
 - 2:45 PM Reach Out and Read*

Re-Designing What We Do

- Team effort
 - Everyone understands the impact and magnitude of the problem
 - Health literacy or integrated into existing committee
- Infuse health literacy concepts in new programs and redesign of current processes

Re-Designing What We Do

- Improved discharge process
 - ReEngineering Discharge project (RED)
 - Up to 30% fewer re-hospitalizations
- Find, develop and use plain language materials

Where to find plain language materials

- MedlinePlus

- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>

- Health Literacy Missouri searchable library

- <http://www.healthliteracymissouri.org/library/>

- Search for “easy to read”

A Comment About Screening

- Many screening tests available
- None measure “health literacy”
- If only 12% of adults are “proficient” at health literacy (NAAL) then why should we screen?

Improve Verbal Communication

- **SLOW DOWN**
- Sit face to face
- Plain language, no jargon
- Simple diagrams

Improve Verbal Communication

- Evidence-based communication techniques
 - Motivational Interviewing
- Check Understanding
 - Teach back method

The Difference One Word Can Make

- Ask the right question:
 - Is there something else you want to address in the visit today?
 - Is there anything else you want to address in the visit today?

Reducing patients' unmet concerns in primary care: The difference one word can make. Heritage J, et al. J Gen Int Med 2007;22;1429-1433.

Something VS Anything

- 280 patients, 20 clinicians, acute care visits
- Using “some” reduced unmet concerns by
78%
- Using “any” was no better than usual care
- No change in visit length

Summary

Low literacy is a **common problem**

Low literacy **affects health**

Effective communication is the key

The Vision

Every patient or their caregiver understands what the problem is, what to do about it and why it's important.

What can **YOU** do?

Be a catalyst for change

What can **YOU** do?

- Raise awareness
 - Colleagues
 - Leadership
 - Friends
 - Legislators

Learn More

- National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy
- Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit
- Health Literacy Interventions and Outcomes
 - Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
 - Systematic review
 - Update from 2004

What can **YOU** do?

- Change your own behavior
 - Slow down
 - Remove the jargon

What can **YOU** do?

- Something VS anything
- Check understanding

What can **YOU** do?

- Start re-designing
 - Processes
 - Forms and other documents

Not Another Project!

- Infuse health literacy concepts in current projects



Keep In Mind

- Universal Design

- Health Literacy Definition

- The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and **understand** basic information and services **needed to make appropriate decisions** regarding their health.

“Action expresses priorities.”

“Be the change that you want to
see in the world.”

---Mohandas Gandhi

