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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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”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Level</th>
<th>Stated Correctly</th>
<th>Demonstrated Correctly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low literacy</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marginal literacy</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adequate literacy</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

Diabetics with retinopathy

- Inadequate: 36%
- Adequate: 19%
Increased Mortality

- Age 70-79
- 2512 participants
- Reading level 8\textsuperscript{th} 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 adequate: 31%
- Adequate: 14%
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.
3. Incorporate accurate, standards-based, and developmentally appropriate health and science information and curricula in child care and education through the university level.
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.
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
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

- Health Literacy Missouri searchable library
  - [http://www.healthliteracycmissouri.org/library/](http://www.healthliteracycmissouri.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?

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