Using Everyday Words to Communicate Health & Wellness
Outline

• Background
• Individual & Organizational Health Literacy
• Why Health Literacy
• Healthy People 2030 Health Literacy Objectives
• IHS Health Literacy Workgroup
What is Health Literacy?

**Personal health literacy** is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

**Organizational health literacy** is the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

Why is Health Literacy Important?

• Only 12 percent of adults have Proficient health literacy, according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy

  ○ Nearly 9 of 10 adults have difficulty using everyday health information

Source: 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy
# Description of Health Literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Literacy Level</th>
<th>Task Examples</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Using a table, calculate an employee’s share of health insurance cost per year.</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Read instructions on a prescription label, and determine what time a person can take the medication.</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Read a pamphlet, and give two reasons a person with no symptoms should be tested for a disease.</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Basic</td>
<td>Read a set of short instructions, and identify what is permissible to drink before a medical test.</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Association of Health Literacy & Emergency Visits (N=167)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Room Visit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more visits</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Readmission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Readmission</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more visits</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Impact of low health literacy on patients’ health outcomes: a multicenter cohort study | BMC Health Services Research | Full Text (biomedcentral.com), 2022.]
Low health literacy is estimated to cost the U.S. economy up to $236 billion every year.¹

- Low literacy creates greater health care use

Improving health literacy could prevent 1 million hospital visits. ¹

- Could save over $25 Billion a Year

UnitedHealth Group, 2020.
Why Should We Care About Health Literacy?

- Are less able to care for their chronic conditions/diseases
- Are more likely to use prescription incorrectly
- Use more health care services
- Experience frustration when interacting with health care system
- Have higher mortality rates
- Are less likely to use preventive health services
- More likely to use the emergency room
Increasing Expectations In Our Patients

People are living longer

- Chronic conditions/diseases
- Aging population

Increasing complex health system

- More medication
- More test and procedures
- Growing self care and management
- More health forms
- Health insurance coverage
- Specialized care
## Taking It From Two Views (Patient/Health Clinic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Patient</strong></th>
<th><strong>Health care</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want to see my doctor and nurse!</td>
<td>Give medication history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to feel better</td>
<td>Make appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give informed consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow health prescription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read health education materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete insurance forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Find your way around in the hospital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Health Literacy & Social Determinants of Health

Family Health History

• Ethnicity/culture
• Communication
• Reading
• Understanding
• Traditional beliefs and practices
• Primary language
Collecting Health Information

- Nurses, doctors, community health representatives, health educators
- Internet search
- Television, radio
- Family, relatives, friends
- Newspaper, magazine
- Traditional practitioner, medicine man, etc.,
- Library
- Social platform
The Way You Live Your Life

• Local community
• Access to healthcare
• Affordability and access to healthy food
• Access to physical activity
• Social activity
• Work
• Income
• Living environment
• Housing
Health & Well-being

• Family health history
• Collecting Health Information
• The Way You Live Your Life
Organizational Health Literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership promotes</th>
<th>Plans, evaluates, and improves</th>
<th>Prepares workforce</th>
<th>Includes consumers</th>
<th>Meets needs of all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicate effectively</td>
<td>Ensures easy access</td>
<td>Designs easy to use material</td>
<td>Targets high-risk</td>
<td>Explains coverage of cost</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Red Rock Health Care Center

Healthy People 2030 Objectives on Health Literacy

The proportion of adults whose health care provider checked their understanding

Decrease the proportion of adults who report poor communication with their health care provider

Increase the proportion of adults whose health care providers involved them in decisions as much as they wanted

Increase the proportion of people who say their online medical record is easy to understand

Increase the proportion of adults with limited English proficiency who say their providers explain things clearly

Increase the health literacy of the population
National Health Literacy Action Plan

- Blueprint to improve health literacy across organizations
- Identified doable goals and strategies
IHS Health Literacy Workgroup

Reconvened in 2017, consisting of a multidisciplinary team.

- Developed a health literacy work plan that aligns with the National Health Literacy Plan.
  - Monitor progress and reassess each year
- Participate in monthly HHS Health Literacy Workgroup
  - Submit annual report
- Developed a 20-minute basic health literacy and plain language training video.
- Developed a “Let’s TALK” poster.
- Established an Annual Health Literacy Award.
  - Individual and Team Categories
IHS Health Literacy Workgroup (Continue)

- Drafted a White Paper that consists of a “Call to Action” to advance health literacy.
- Promote “documentation of patient comprehension in the Electronic Health Record (EHR).”
- Encourage patients to set behavioral health goals, document, and reassess at the next visit.
- Promote health literacy at meetings, workshops, conferences, and regional meetings.
- Host webinars on best and promising practices.
- Dental Health Literacy Initiative
Take Action to Improve Communication & Understanding

• Use health literacy universal precaution approach
  • Cannot tell if a person can understand
  • May have anxieties
  • The best practice is to use clear everyday language
Take Action to Improve Communication & Understanding (continued)

Use Plain Language

- Active voice
- Common Words
- Keep it short
- Positive tone
- Logical Organization
- Easy-to-read features
Take Action to Improve Communication & Understanding (continued)

- Use infographics
- Illustrations
- Positive messaging
- Short and actionable
- Have white space

MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES!

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST CANCER

- Do not use commercial tobacco
- Eat healthy
- Get screened for certain cancers
- Move every day
- Maintain healthy weight
- Avoid alcohol or drink in small amounts
- Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke
- Use sun screen and wear a hat
Take Action to Improve Communication & Understanding (continued)

Using everyday words

- Annually → Yearly or every year
- Arthritis → Pain in joints
- Cardiovascular → Having to do with the heart
- Dermatologist → Skin doctor.
- Diabetes → Elevated sugar in the blood.
- Hypertension → High blood pressure.
Use teach-back method

Ask patients to repeat or tell you, **in their own words**

If patients cannot restate your instructions correctly, then explain again. Use pictures, illustrations, or simpler words.

Again, use the teach-back method until you confirm understanding.
Take Action to Improve Communication & Understanding (Continued)

Teach-back method

• 83.5% of patients retained information when asked to restate compared to 60.8% of those not engaged in teach-back. *

• Enables patients to rephrase using own language.

• Don’t just ask if they understand.

• Instead ask patients to explain what they heard or have them demonstrate back what they heard.

Health Literacy & Diabetes Management

• Disease Management
  • Understand the physiology
  • Monitor their glucose
  • Take medication
  • Eat healthy
  • Maintaining health weight
  • Getting physical activity
  • Food preparation and selection
  • Avoid commercial tobacco
Future Plan

• Develop a teach-back video
• Develop a “Talking to Your Provider About Your Medication” video
• Propose integration of standard language in the job announcement by using clear written and oral language intended for an appropriate audience.
• Develop additional training videos to post at the Learning Management System.
What You Can Do

**IHS Introduction to Health Literacy**

**Annual Health Literacy Award**

Use illustrations and pictures

Use *teach back* techniques

Document patient comprehension in Electronic Health Record

Pretest printed material with target audience

Read IHS blog on Health Literacy and breast cancer

Establish a Health Literacy workgroup and develop a plan
What You Can Do

• Use universal health literacy precaution
• Use plain language (everyday words)
• Focus on “need to know” and “need to do”
• Have Native speakers for those who do not understand English
• Learn about the local culture
Tools & Resources

CDC Clear Communication
NIH Clear Communication
Everyday Words for Public Health Communication
Teach-Back Technique
Questions