



**Institute *for*
Healthcare Advancement**

Advancing Health Literacy toward Health Equity

Welcome

Health Literacy 101: An Introduction



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What You'll Learn

- Health Literacy: Definitions, Components, Examples
- Data from National Surveys
- Video Clip: “Health literacy and patient safety: Help patients understand”
- Health Literacy Statistics / Prevalence / Costs
- Should We Screen?

Literacy / Health Literacy Definitions

Literacy

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

– Kirsch et al, 1993

Literacy / Health Literacy Definitions

Health Literacy

Health literacy is an interaction between the skills of the public and the demands/expectations of the health sector.

Health Literacy

Out of date...

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

– Ratzan and Parker, 2000

Health Literacy

Healthy People 2030 – Personal HL, Organizational HL

- **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.

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. How Does Healthy People Define Health Literacy?

Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<https://health.gov/our-work/healthy-people/healthy-people-2030/health-literacy-healthy-people-2030>

Another way to think of it...

“Health literacy is a state, not a trait.”

– Brach C. AHRQ

Health Literacy Components

- Reading and writing
- Listening and verbal communication (patient and provider)
- Numeracy
 - ✓ Computation skills
 - ✓ Interpreting / evaluating risk (%)
- Self-efficacy

Other Considerations

- Culture / belief systems
- Mismatch between provider demand and patient skill level
- Mismatch of reading level / materials
- Strong relation to health disparities
- Strong relation to safety and quality

You know what you mean... But does he?

My Doctor said...
“Only 1 glass of alcohol a day”...

I can live with that.



This happens...

An 89-year-old man with dementia is diagnosed with an ear infection and is prescribed an oral liquid antibiotic.

His wife understands that he must take one teaspoon twice a day. After carefully studying the bottle's label and not finding administration instructions, she fills a teaspoon and pours it into his painful ear.

– Parker, R. et al. J Health Comm, 2003.

This happens, too...

Mr. G, 45, an Hispanic immigrant, native Spanish language speaker, has a job health screening.

He is told his BP is high, can't work until it's controlled. Given β -blocker, diuretic, instructed to take each "**once a day.**" 1 week later, presents @ ED, BP very low, dizzy. Docs can't figure out. Spanish speaker asks him how many pills he took each day.

- Nielsen-Bohlman et al. IoM
"A Prescription to End Confusion" 2004

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Spanish speaker asks him how many pills he took each day. "22," says Mr. G. (**In Spanish, once means 11.**)

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Who's to Blame?

At a teaching hospital, an intern writes in a “Patient’s problems” section of the medical chart, “Speaks no English.”

The attending physician writes a note back in response, “Your problem, not his.”

– Clancy C. AHRQ. Comments at Institute of Medicine Health Literacy Roundtable 2/09.



And Now, A Word From Your Patients...

Clips from the AMA Foundation video, “Help Your Patients Understand”
Available from <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/ama-foundation/our-programs/public-health/health-literacy-program/health-literacy-video.page>

This is where that video segment will be
placed in video editor

Literacy / Health Literacy Statistics Data Sources

- 1992 NALS (National Adult Literacy Survey)
- 2003 NAAL (National Assessment of Adult Literacy)
Added Health Literacy Module
- No further NAAL studies planned (PIAAC)

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/

Literacy Levels

- **Below Basic** — no more than the most simple & concrete literacy skills
- **Basic** — skills needed to perform simple, everyday literacy activities
- **Intermediate** — skills needed to perform moderately challenging activities
- **Proficient** — skills needed for more complex & challenging literacy activities

NAAL Literacy Findings

**Percent of U.S. adult population
with Below Basic or Basic skills in:**

- Prose Literacy – 44%
- Document Literacy – 34%
- Quantitative Literacy (Numeracy) – 55%

NAAL Health Literacy Findings

- 36% have limited health literacy skills (22% Basic, 14% Below Basic)
- **Only 12% (about 1 in 10) considered *proficient***
- About half (53%) had intermediate HL levels
- Women's avg. HL score 6 pts. higher (4% more men in Below Basic)

Who has poor health literacy?

- Nearly 60% of 65+ in Basic/Below Basic
- Health ins. from employer ↑ HL,
Medicare/Medicaid/No ins ↓ HL
- Hispanics (16% of adult pop.) represent 35%
of those in Below Basic HL category
- Below poverty level (17% adult pop.) represent 43%
of those in Below Basic HL
- 75% who self-reported poor health in Below Basic HL

**Why is this a BSD...
(big stinking deal)?**

Why Does Health Literacy Matter?

Those with limited literacy skills:

- Report poorer overall health
- Have poorer ability to manage chronic diseases
- Have poorer outcomes
- Less likely to understand their diagnosis
- Less likely to have screening / preventive care
- Present in later stages of disease
- Are more likely to be hospitalized / rehospitalized

Why Does Health Literacy Matter?

Cost of Poor Health Literacy:

- \$73 billion in unnecessary costs annually
(Friedland, Georgetown University, 2003)
- \$106-\$238 billion in unnecessary costs annually
(Vernon, University of Connecticut, 2007)

Why Does Health Literacy Matter?

Cost of Chronic Disease:

- \$1.1 trillion direct treatment (2016)
- \$3.7 trillion including indirect cost (~20% GDP)
- 60% Americans live with a chronic disease (40% 2+)
- 90% >65 have a chronic disease; 77% have 2+
- 70% of annual US deaths (CDC 2010)

Health Literacy Statistics

- 1 in 2 Americans can't read above an 8th grade level (Kirsch 2003)
- Most patient education materials written beyond recipients' ability to understand (IoM 2004)
- 26% couldn't understand when next appt.
- 42% couldn't understand "take on empty stomach"
- 60% couldn't understand consent form (*JAMA* 1995)

Stir In...

- 381 languages spoken/signed in U.S.
- 47 million foreign-born people live in the United States (2015)
- 60 million Americans (~20%) speak a language other than English at home
- 24 million Americans (~8%) have LEP (*limited English proficiency*)
- 75-90% of patients in the 2 lowest reading levels describe themselves as being able to read/write English “well” or “very well”

Oh, and then there's...

- Cognitive impairment
- Hearing / visual impairment
- Medications
- Stress (most forget at least 50% of what healthcare provider told them)
- Shame about illiteracy:
 - ✓ 78% thought they should hide it/cope
 - ✓ 77% never told their doctor
 - ✓ 67% never told their spouse
 - ✓ 19% never told anyone

To Screen or Not to Screen...

- Universal Precautions (treat all as “low literate”)
- Newest Vital Sign (Weiss et al, Family Med, 2005) – ice cream nutritional label (6 questions, 3 minutes)
- “How confident are you filling out forms by yourself?”

– Chew, L. D., et al (2008). Validation of screening questions for limited health literacy in a large VA outpatient population. *JGIM*, 23(5), 561–566. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-008-0520-5>

Thank you!

What questions do you have?



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