



National Council to Improve Patient Safety Through Health Literacy

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On behalf of the National Council to Improve Patient Safety Through Health Literacy, I am writing to request your consideration of the enclosed proposal. Developed by the Council, the proposal focuses on the need to elevate health literacy to a National Patient Safety Goal.

Background

In 2019, the Health Literacy Committee of Greater Cleveland (Ohio) recognized that many local healthcare organizations lacked awareness of health literacy as a patient safety issue. We also recognized that this problem exists well beyond our local jurisdiction. The lack of health literacy initiatives at the organizational level is a challenge nationally.

Without a mandate in place, our experience indicates that many healthcare organizations don't establish policies and procedures needed to implement health literacy best practices. Seeing the need for a mandate, our local committee initiated a call for action—forming a National Council comprised of recognized health literacy experts. The Council framed the problem and formulated solutions as compelling and critical issues in patient safety.

Our Proposed Solution

The enclosed proposal, along with true life examples, illustrates the need for recognizing that health literacy is, at its core, a primary patient safety issue.

In the proposal you will find:

- A summary of what could occur when organizations do not address health literacy.
- The Council's evidence-based recommendation for health literacy as a National Patient Safety Goal, including elements of performance to achieve the goal.
- Resources/tools organizations can use to address health literacy and improve patient safety.
- Three case studies that address the importance of universally incorporating spoken plain language, the teach-back method, and plain language print materials into the patient encounter (Appendix).

About the Council

Our Council is made up of 18 dedicated health professionals who live throughout the United States. Please see the enclosed roster of Council members to learn more about them. We have been meeting twice per month for many months to formulate the recommendations in the enclosed proposal.

We appreciate your considering our request to include health literacy as a National Patient Safety Goal. I would be pleased to answer any questions. Please contact me at this number: **216-536-4796**.

Sincerely,

Karen Komondor, BSN, RN, CCRN

St. Vincent Charity Medical Center, Cleveland, OH
Chair, National Council to Improve Patient Safety Through Health Literacy