



22nd Annual
**Health Literacy
Conference**
Virtual • May 9-11, 2023

*Working Better Together:
Leveraging the Power of Health Literacy
to Improve Health Equity*



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Dr. Michele Lucille Lopez

DHED, MA, RN, CNE, CDE, CHES

Speaker

Pace University
College of Health Professions, Lienhard School of Nursing
Pleasantville, New York

The Importance of Health Literacy for Graduate Registered Nurses

Dr. Michele Lucille Lopez

Assistant Professor, Pace University

- Registered Nurse for 29 years
- BS in nursing from Pace University, NY -1995
- Masters Degree in Nursing Administration from Teacher's College Columbia University, NY -1998
- Doctorate in Health Education from AT Still University- 1998
- Dissertation: Incivility in Nursing Academia- student perceptions- published in Nursing Education Perspectives-2023
- Certifications: CNE, CDE, CHES



Objectives

At the completion of the presentation, workshop participants will be able to:

- Describe the role nurses play to promote and improve health literacy
- Identify potential challenges which impair graduate nurses from integrating client health literacy into individualized client treatment plans.
- Describe potential strategies and initiatives which will enhance health literacy



Health Literacy

- The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Healthy People 2030 Initiative, state health literacy encompasses information and resources people need to make well informed health decisions.
- Health literacy encompasses a wide range of skills such as:
 - Reading
 - Ability to accurately calculate medication doses
 - Reviewing food labels to ensure safe consumption for someone with a food allergy
 - Ability to follow directions such as with preparation instructions for procedures such as fasting before blood work
- Communication is central and essential to health literacy

Reference:

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (n.d.). An introduction to health literacy. <https://www.nlm.gov/guides/intro-health-literacy>



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Health Literacy Skills

- The individual will possess the skills and abilities to comprehend verbal instructions and printed materials
- The individual is capable of seeking clarification

Reference:

Isibel, D. (2021). Health literacy and importance to prelicensure nursing students. *Health*. <https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/expert-insights/health-literacy-and-importance-to-prelicensure-nursing-students>



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Low Health Literacy

- According to HHS, (n.d.), 9 out of 10 adults struggle with health literacy
- Limited health literacy skills are associated with poor health outcomes:
- High risk for medication errors
- Challenges managing chronic health issues
- Increased visits to emergency departments and increased hospital stays
- Missed opportunities for preventative and screen services such as vaccines and colonoscopies
- Experience delayed diagnosis

Reference:

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (n.d.). An introduction to health literacy. <https://www.nlm.gov/guides/intro-health-literacy>



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Nurses are Key Players in Providing and Promoting Health Literacy

- Inherent in the role of the nurse is the professional responsibility to provide client education and to evaluate the effectiveness of the information offered.
- Nurses have an ethical duty
- Health literacy applies to all interactions nurses have with their clients

Reference:

Isibel, D. (2021). Health literacy and importance to prelicensure nursing students. *Health*. <https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/expert-insights/health-literacy-and-importance-to-prelicensure-nursing-students>



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Warning Signs of Low Health Literacy

- Frequent cancelled or missed office appointments
- Missing information on registration forms
- Ineffective adherence with medication therapy, illness management
- Inability to name medications/ identifying them by shape and color
- Do not ask for questions

Reference:

Woody, D. (2019). Health literacy: answering the call. Virginia Nurses Today, 27(2).



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Nursing Focus in Addressing Health Literacy

- Recognize that clients are often overwhelmed by the amount of information given.
- Incorporate a variety of resources to support client literacy such as pictures and demonstrations.
- Use clearly written education materials that have been scored for readability
- Use open-ended questions.
- Serve as a client advocate and speak up on behalf of your clients
- Serve as an agent of change and raise awareness

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Woody, D. (2019). Health literacy: answering the call. Virginia Nurses Today, 27(2).



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Challenges associated with health literacy and new nurses

- Recent/new graduates of nursing programs
- Impact of COVID crisis on nursing education
 - Pivot to remote learning (Zoom, Lab Sim, Clinical Sim)
 - Reduction in LIVE, in-agency clinical experiences
 - Limited opportunities to observe and participate in health literacy during client care
 - Less real-world experience, direct patient interaction, and decrease in person instructor learning
- Health literacy and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) need more emphasis in nursing curriculum
- Nurses are focused on providing critical patient interventions in an already understaff and overworked environment

Challenges associated with health literacy in the workforce

Workforce related issues:

- Nursing burnout
- Staffing shortages
- High nurse-client ratios
- Crisis mode/survival mode mentality, especially as it correlates with COVID crisis, where the focus has been on addressing immediate health issues and having limited time and resources to assess and address client health literacy and health promotion
- Inadequate mentoring and support with elements of health literacy, and providing culturally competent and culturally sensitive care,
- Time constraints which reduce nurse-client interactions



Challenges associated with health literacy and Patient Populations

Client issues:

- Aging population and acute health issues
- Diverse health needs
- Limited resources and support
- Clients are unfamiliar with the health care system and have challenges navigating the intricacies



Initiatives to Address Health Literacy

- Raise awareness and start the dialog with stakeholders (Health care agencies, nursing schools and accrediting bodies, professional organizations, etc.). to proactively address methods to bridge the gap
- Student nurses to observe and participate in health literacy to gain experience and increase comfort and skill level, introduce mentoring programs, nurses and health care professionals serve as role models
- Provide additional client resources to bridge the gap (agencies to provide follow-up phone calls/texts after discharge, follow-up phone calls/texts after outpatient visits, create caller friendly phone systems which reduce wait times and offer individualized, compassionate, culturally competent and culturally sensitive care).



Recommendations

- Nursing baccalaureate programs should emphasize health literacy in curricula with health literacy being introduced in the first nursing courses
- Health literacy will be theme for nursing courses with assignments given in didactic and clinical
- Health literacy assessment should be delivered in a formative and summative manner, which will support the nurse's role in as patient educator
- Health literacy needs consistent enforcement in the clinical experiences and health literacy objectives must be incorporated in the clinical evaluation forms and clinical pre/post written assignments



Recommendations

- Incorporate Health Literacy, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in nursing curriculum
- Research to determine if student nurses and graduate nurses are equipped with the knowledge and skills to promote health literacy
- Research to determine client perspectives regarding their health literacy needs and determine how nursing can address client health literacy.

Thank you

mlopez3@pace.edu



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References

- Heath, S. (2018). Nurses must be involved in patient health literacy support. [Nurses Must Be Involved in Patient Health Literacy Support \(patientengagementhit.com\)](https://patientengagementhit.com)
- Isibel, D. (2021). Health literacy and importance to prelicensure nursing students. *Health*. <https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/expert-insights/health-literacy-and-importance-to-prelicensure-nursing-students>
- Jacobs, A. (2021). Nursing is in crisis: staff shortages put patients at risk. The New York Times. [‘Nursing Is in Crisis’: Staff Shortages Put Patients at Risk - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/10/health/nursing-shortages-patients-at-risk.html)
- United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (n.d.). An introduction to health literacy. <https://www.nlm.gov/guides/intro-health-literacy>
- Woody, D. (2019). Health literacy: answering the call.). *Virginia Nurses Today*, 27(2).





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Thank You

IHA and Health Literacy

- The Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) Public Charity
- Mission initiative to advance health literacy toward health equity
- We have been active in health literacy since 1999

