



Health Literacy 101: An Introduction

Michael Villaire, MSLM

President / CEO, Institute for Healthcare Advancement

Virtual Conference: Arizona's Health Literacy 2020
Applying Health Literacy to Improve Health Outcomes

August 26, 2020

Welcome / About IHA / Some Thank-You's

- About IHA
- Health Literacy Specialist Certificate
- Our Heartfelt Thanks:
 - Partner--Arizona Department of Health Services
 - Sponsors--Magellan Cares Foundation, Health Choice, Crisis Response Network, Ashline
- Special Thank You: Jeanette Mallery / Planning Committee

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Out of date...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

Much better...

- “Health literacy occurs when a society provides accurate health information and services that people can easily find, understand, and use to inform their decisions and actions.” (Proposed Update of the Definition of Health Literacy. Healthy People 2030. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion [cited March 9, 2020])

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.



DirtyButton.com

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

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. "22," says Mr. G. (In Spanish, *once* means 11.)

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

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>

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)
- **About 12% considered proficient**
 - Includes 3% who did poorly on basic screening tasks, routed to alternative assessment
 - Does not include 2% who knew no English or Spanish
- 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 (12% 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 this is a BSD

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)

Cost of Chronic Disease:

- \$1.7 trillion (75% of HC expenditures)
- 1 in 2 Americans live with a chronic disease (2012)
- 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

Parikh, N.S., et al. Patient Educ Couns, 1996

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 often do you need to have someone help you when you read instructions, pamphlets, or other written materials from your doctor or pharmacy?” OR “How happy are you with how well you read?”

--Chew, LD. Family Med. Sept. 2004

Thank you!

What questions do you have?

Michael Villaire, MSLM
President/CEO
Institute for Healthcare Advancement
www.iha4health.org
mvillaire@iha4health.org
(562) 690-4001 x202

**The Institute for Healthcare Advancement's
19th Annual Health Literacy Conference**

www.hlc.iha4health.org