

Low Health Literacy: What do Providers Need to Know?

Darcel Reyes, PhD, ANP-BC
Melanie Steilen RN,BSN,ACRN

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Disclosure

The following people have no relevant financial, professional, or personal relationships to disclose:

Faculty:

Darcel Reyes, ANP-BC, PhD
Melanie Steilen RN,BSN,ACRN

There are no commercial supporters of this activity.

[2]

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the signs of low or limited health literacy
- Understand the effect of low literacy on the health of people living with HIV
- Use screening tools effectively to assess for low health literacy
- Review strategies to address low health literacy
- Teach people how to identify reliable internet health information

True or False:

- 1. People will tell you if they have problems reading.
- 2. Health literacy is about reading and writing skills.
- 3. Most people with low literacy skills are members of a racial or ethnic minority.
- 4. Only people who didn't finish high school have problems with health literacy.
- 5 It is possible that patients with a well managed chronic disease have limited health literacy.
- 6. It is easy to tell if someone has limited literacy



What is Health Literacy?

“**Health literacy** is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to **obtain, process, and understand** basic health information and services needed to make appropriate **health decisions.**”

A “health literate” person is able to:

Read, understand, and use:

- Health information: medication instructions, education materials, nutrition labels, insurance costs and benefits
- Registration forms, patient rights, informed consent
- Public health alerts or campaigns

Calculate:

- Medication doses

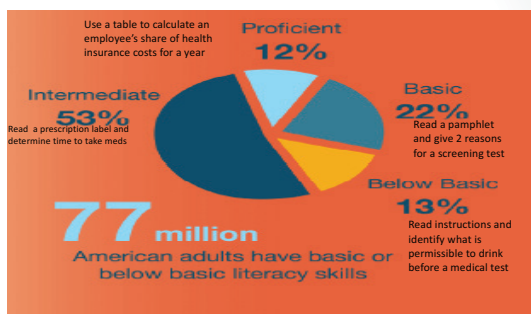
Describe:

- Symptoms or health concerns
- Changes in health status

Assess:

- Validity of available health information from non-medical sources
- The best health plan for themselves and their family based on costs and benefits

The National Survey Of Health Literacy found:



The Big Disconnect

Only **12%** of Americans have a proficient level of health literacy, but our health care system generally caters to this **12%**.

- ❑ **Medication Instructions:** "1 tablet, by mouth, twice a day, 10 days, for a total of 20."
- ❑ **Insurance/Billing:** "Your health plan doesn't require that you pay a deductible, but your co-pay will be what is indicated for the office visit on your insurance card."
- ❑ **Immunization Recommendations:** "While it isn't clear whether people with HIV are susceptible to a more severe case of the flu than others, studies show that HIV-positive people tend to have higher rates of complications from influenza than others and more prolonged cases of flu and flu symptoms, so it is recommended that people living with HIV get a flu vaccine every year."
- ❑ **Signage:** "Ambulatory Care"

People with limited health literacy:

-Have more difficulty navigating the healthcare system:

- finding providers
- completing forms (registration, consent, billing)
- filling prescriptions
- sharing health information with providers
- enrolling in insurance

-Use preventive services less and emergency rooms more

-Have a higher incidence of chronic diseases and may have more difficulty with disease management

-Have more difficulty taking medication properly

-Increase health care costs \$50 billion to \$73 billion annually

Providers have difficulty identifying patients with limited health literacy

- Some patients with limited health literacy:
 - Have completed high school or college.
 - Are well spoken.
 - Look over written materials and say they understand.
 - Hold white collar or health care jobs.
 - Function well when not under stress

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Health Literacy RED FLAGS

- Difficulty explaining symptoms
- Use excuses to avoid reading, e. g., “I forgot my glasses.”
- Lots of papers folded up together-important, unimportant, and expired
- Missed appointments
- Difficulty explaining how to take medications
- Take overly long or refuses to fill out forms.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7X4CoXldlCA>

Do people understand the instructions we give them?

SCREENING TOOLS

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Bring Up the Topic

- “How far did you go in school?”
- “A lot of people have trouble reading things they get from the doctor because of all the medical words. Is it hard for you to read the things you get here at the clinic?”

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Assess health literacy with four simple questions:

Do you like to read?

or

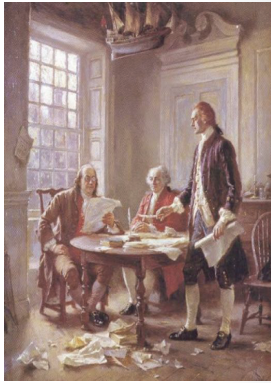
How happy are you with the way you read?



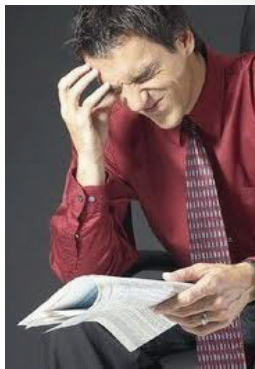
What is the best way for you to learn new things?



How confident are you to fill out medical forms by yourself?



How often do you have problems learning about your medical condition because of difficulty understanding written information?



Nutrition Facts		1/2 cup
Serving Size		4
Servings per container		4
Amount per serving		
Calories	250	Fat Cal 120
		%DV
Total Fat	13g	20%
Sat Fat	9g	40%
Cholesterol	28mg	12%
Sodium	55mg	2%
Total Carbohydrate	30g	12%
Dietary Fiber	2g	
Sugars	23g	
Protein	4g	8%

*Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Ingredients: Cream, Skim Milk, Liquid Sugar, Water, Egg Yolks, Brown Sugar, Milkfat, Peanut Oil, Sugar, Butter, Salt, Carrageenan, Vanilla Extract.

Score Sheet for the Newest Vital Sign
Questions and Answers

NAME (LAST, FIRST, MIDDLE INITIAL): _____

DATE: _____

SCORE (0-10): _____

1. Fill out the entire container. How many servings will you eat?

Answer: 4 (1/2 cup) (1/2 cup) (1/2 cup)
2. How are saturated fats and grams of carbohydrates in a snack, like nuts or pretzels, measured?

Answer: by weight (ounces) and grams. Look for the amount on a label. And the number of grams of saturated fats is listed as "Sat Fat." How many grams of saturated fat are there in 1/2 cup of nuts or pretzels?

Answer: 9g (1/2 cup) (1/2 cup)
3. How much sodium is in 1/2 cup of pretzels?

Answer: 55mg (1/2 cup) (1/2 cup) (1/2 cup)
4. How many grams of cholesterol are in 1/2 cup of pretzels?

Answer: 28mg (1/2 cup) (1/2 cup) (1/2 cup)

NUMBER OF CORRECT ANSWERS: _____

SCORE (0-10): _____

Score of 10 indicates the highest level of health literacy. Score of 9 indicates the ability to understand most health information. Score of 8 indicates the ability to understand some health information. Score of 7 indicates the ability to understand basic health information. Score of 6 indicates the ability to understand simple health information. Score of 5 indicates the ability to understand very basic health information. Score of 4 indicates the ability to understand very basic health information. Score of 3 indicates the ability to understand very basic health information. Score of 2 indicates the ability to understand very basic health information. Score of 1 indicates the ability to understand very basic health information. Score of 0 indicates the ability to understand very basic health information.

The Newest Vital Sign

<http://www.pfizerhealthliteracy.com/physicians-providers/newestvitalsign.aspx>

Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine- Short Form

REALM-SF Form

Patient name _____ Date of birth _____ Reading level _____

Date _____ Examiner _____ Grade completed _____

Menopause	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Antibiotics	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	Also available in Spanish
Jaundice	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rectal	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anemia	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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A Pill Bottle

Local Pharmacy
123 MAIN STREET
ANYTOWN, USA 11111 (800) 555-5555

DR. C. JONES
NO. 0060023-08291 DATE 06-23-09

JANE SMITH
456 MAIN STREET ANYTOWN, US 11111

TAKE ONE CAPSULE BY MOUTH THREE TIMES DAILY FOR 10 DAYS UNTIL ALL TAKEN

AMOXICILLIN 500MG CAPSULE

QTY _____ MRG _____


NO REFILLS - DR. AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED

USE BEFORE 06/23/12
SLF/SLF

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THE MAIN PROBLEM WITH COMMUNICATION IS THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT HAS OCCURRED.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



The Use of Plain Language

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How much information can people retain?

The experts say people only remember 5-7 bits of information!

Nearly 50% of the information people remember is incorrect
(Did you play "telephone" as a child?)

Providers often overestimate how well they communicate

**Most healthcare visits result in INFORMATION OVERLOAD
SO, What can we do to change this?????**

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Doaks, Doaks, & Root, 1996

WE can improve communication by...

...using health literacy universal precautions.

Health literacy universal precautions are the steps that practices take when they assume that all patients may have difficulty comprehending health information and accessing health services.

- Plain language for clear communication
- Teach back method to assess understanding
- Use of easy to read health material

USE Plain Language!!!!

Plain language is clear, succinct speech or writing designed to ensure the listener or reader understands as quickly and completely as possible.

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Plain Language

Plain language strategies:

- Use “**living room**” language
- Use one or two syllable words when possible
- Give information in small chunks
- **Use visual aids or props when appropriate**
- When defining a medical term, you may need to use a phrase, sentence, or paragraph to describe a word
- Limit key messages to no more than 3-5 “need to do,”
- Eliminate “nice to know” messages

Plain Language

Myths about plain language:

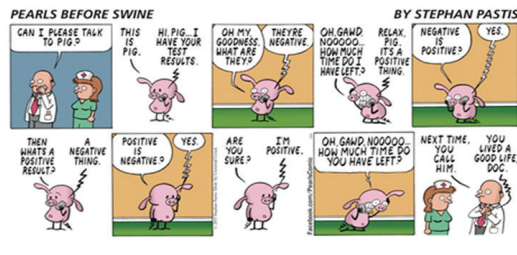
- × Unprofessional or inaccurate
- × “Dumbing down” information for patients
- × Disrespectful
- × Takes too much time
- × Just for patients with limited English proficiency

In reality, plain language is:

- Respectful to patients
- Easy to understand
- An important part of creating a shame-free environment for patients
- Simple to use with all patients (with practice)

Do Patients really understand what we are saying to them?

The terms NEGATIVE and POSITIVE have REAL Consequences in HIV Care



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Common Medical Term	Plain Language
Viral Load	How much HIV is in your body
Antibody	
Immunization	
Contraception	
Adverse reaction	
Deficiency	
Incubation period	

Common Medical Term	Plain Language
Viral Load	How much HIV is in your body
Antibody	What your body makes to fight HIV (or another infection)
Immunization	Shot, vaccine
Contraception	Birth control
Adverse reaction	Bad side effect, bad reaction
Deficiency	Lack, not enough
Incubation period	How long a germ is in a person's body before they look or feel sick

Use the Teach Back Method

Why use Teach Back?
Teach Back can:

- uncover health beliefs
- reinforce health messages
- open a dialogue with patients
- improve patient understanding of disease
- lower hospital readmission rates
- increase patient satisfaction

Teach Back Method

Patients should view teach back as you verifying how well you explained information - not as a test.

- "I want to be sure that I did a good job explaining everything today. Can you tell me how you're going to take your new blood pressure medicine?"
- "What foods are you going to avoid while you're taking this medicine?"
- "I gave you a lot of papers to take home. Which papers are you going to bring when you go to see the eye doctor?"



Teach your patient to ask

- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do about the problem?
- Why is it important for me to do it?

Pfizerhealthliteracy.com

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End your visit with this statement:

"I bet a lot of questions have been on your mind as we've talked.

Tell me 1 or 2 questions you've been thinking about."

Questions to avoid at the end of the visit:

- "Do you understand?"
- "Does that make sense?"
- "Do you have any questions?"

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PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS
www.usp.org/audiences/consumers/pictograms/form.html

For hypertension (high blood pressure)

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What about the information patients look for on the internet?????

INTERNET HEALTH INFORMATION: AS RELIABLE AS CONVERSATION AT A BAR

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What's the problem with most health information websites?

- The reading level of most are 11th grade
- Use scientific language or medical jargon
- Lots of words!
- People can't tell the difference between commercial websites, government websites, or research institutions or...
- the difference between advertisements and real information

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HIV websites?

- A study of information websites for HIV found that 75% were updated within 1 year of publication and 25% were reviewed by an expert.
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It was journal referenced

Importance of Rethinking AIDS

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Literacy Doesn't Matter on the Web!

- PLWH with both HIGH and LOW health literacy believed the claims of fraudulent websites
- Believed that HIV did not cause AIDS and that scientist were still debating the cause of AIDS
- PLWH with HIGH health literacy believed websites that claimed herbal cures for HIV **and** evidence-based websites
- Experienced more HIV symptoms, had less adherence to treatment regimens, and were less likely to be undetectable

Kalishman, et al., 2010; Kalishman, et al., 2012

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What makes a website reliable?

HON @ a CODE

- Sponsorship:** Is There an "About us" tab?
- Funding:** how Is the site funded?
- Quality:** are Contributors Identified?
- Privacy policy:** Is Personal info Protected?
- Currency:** Is the site up-to-date?
- Advertising policy:** Are ads clearly labeled?

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Evaluating Internet Health Information

Start the tutorial



<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/webeval/webeval.html>

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Some Tips:

- **KISS**
- **Keep It Short and Simple**
- Pictures speak louder than words
- Personalize, don't Generalize!
- **Teach back:**
 See it, hear it, and do it and repeat it!
- Safest internet sources: .gov, .edu, and .org, and sites with a HON designation
- Literacy is the latest vital sign!

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Key Messages:

- Health literacy is a person's ability to understand and use health information to make healthy choices.
- Health literacy has a significant impact on patient outcomes.
- The vast majority of people do not have a high level of health literacy; yet our health care system caters to the few that do.

Key Messages:

- The language we use is unfamiliar to patients
- Plain language helps people understand health information.
- Plain language takes time and practice.
- Plain language helps create a shame-free environment for patients.
- Health care providers overestimate how well they communicate information.
- Teach back is our best way to assess patient understanding.
- Teach back should be used in every patient interaction by every healthcare professional.

Key Messages:

- Health Literacy is also the capacity of **health care providers** to communicate effectively so community members are able to make informed health decisions.
- **Health care providers** can use health literacy universal precautions, teach-back, and Ask3 to mitigate the health literacy disconnect.
- Using plain language and teach back method doesn't necessarily add more time to patient interactions; any time added is time ultimately saved later on.

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Literacy in the Future:

“The illiterate of the future will not be the person who cannot read. **It will be the person who does not know how to learn.**”

Alvin Toffler
Future Shock

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Remember the wisdom of POOH:



Acknowledgements

- NYSDOH AIDS Institute, "Health Literacy in HIV, STI and Viral Hepatitis Care", Training Manual for Health Care Professionals. August 2015
- <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/providers/training>

Health Literacy Resources

- <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/literacy/healthliteracytoolkit.pdf>
- <http://nchealthliteracy.org/communication.html>
- <http://www.healthroadsmedia.org/index.htm>
- <http://www.cms.gov/WrittenMaterialsToolkit/>

Thank You!

Darcel Reyes, ANP-BC, PhD
Darcel.reyes@rutgers.edu
Melanie Steilen BSN, RN, ACRN
Melanie@caiglobal.org
