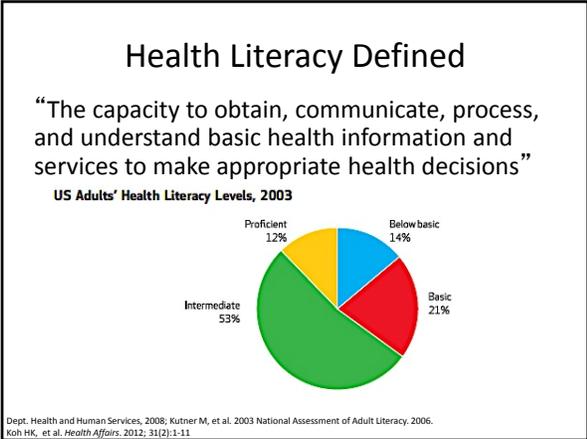


## Health Literacy in the Pharmacy: Challenges and Strategies for Communication

NHPA  
September 10, 2017

- ### Objectives
- Describe health literacy principles and the impact of limited health literacy on patient health outcomes and health care costs
  - Identify patients and situations where patient outcome may be at risk due to poor health literacy
  - Employ strategies to improve communication and understanding in daily patient encounters



- ### The Cycle of Costly ‘Crisis Care’
- A wide chasm often separates what providers intend to convey in written and oral communication and what patients understand.
  - Too many people are hospitalized after being given ambiguous instructions about medications or failing to recognize symptoms of a worsening condition.
  - Improved health literacy has the potential to help address issues of health care access, quality and cost.
  - The way health care personnel (starting at the front desk) communicate can help minimize confusion and improve health outcomes.
- Koh, Howard K. et al. "New Federal Policy Initiatives to Boost Health Literacy Can Help the Nation Move Beyond the Cycle of Costly 'Crisis Care'". *Health Affairs*, January 2012, published on line before print.

### Cost of Low Health Literacy to the U.S. Economy

**\$106 - \$238 Billion Annually**

Resulting from:

- Medication errors
- Excess hospitalizations
- Longer hospital stays
- More use of emergency services
- Higher level of illness

Vernon, J.A., et al (2007). *Low health literacy: Implications for national policy*, from [www.healthliteracymissouri.org/uploads/HLM/pdfs/Vernon.Report.pdf](http://www.healthliteracymissouri.org/uploads/HLM/pdfs/Vernon.Report.pdf)

- ### Let’s Kahoot
- Go to Kahoot.it on your phone, tablet or laptop
  - Insert the Game Pin
  - Create a nickname
    - make sure it appears on screen
  - OK, go!

### Question

At what health literacy level would a person be able to:

- Read instructions on a prescription label and determine what time a person can take the medication?
- Basic
- Intermediate
- Below Basic
- Proficient

### Question

- What level of health literacy is needed to find the information required to define a medical term by searching through a complex document
- Below Basic
- Intermediate
- Proficient
- Basic

### What Is It Like?

This passage simulates what a below basic level reader sees on the printed page.

Hint: Each word is written backward and the first word is "CLEANING."

**GNINAELC – Ot erussa hgih ecnamrofre, yllacidoirep naelc eht epat sdaeh dna natpac revenehw uoy eciton na noitalumucca fo tsud dna nworb-der edixo selcitrapp. Esu a nottoc baws denetsiom htiw lyporposi lohocla. Eb erus on lohocla sehuot eht rebbur strap, sa ti sdnet ot yrd dna yllautneve kcarc eht rebbur. Esu a pmad tholc ro egnops ot naelc eht tenibac. A dlim paos, ekil gnihawsid tnegretd, lliw pleh evomer esaerg ro lio.**

### National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) Levels

- **Proficient – 12% ( 26 million)**  
Could calculate an employee's share of health insurance costs using a table based on family income and size
- **Intermediate – 53% (114 million)**  
Could identify three substances that may interact with an over-the-counter drug to cause side effects, using information on the over-the-counter drug label
- **Basic - 21% (47 million)**  
Could give reasons why a person with no symptoms of a specific disease should be tested for the disease, based on information in a clearly written pamphlet
- **Below Basic - 14% (30 million)**  
Could circle the date of a medical appointment on a hospital appointment slip

### Health Literacy Is Not

- ❖ **The same thing as general literacy.**
- ❖ A rocket scientist diagnosed with diabetes may have trouble understanding a new and complex self-care routine
- ❖ **Only about reading.**
- ❖ Obtaining, understanding and acting on health information encompasses a range of skills including communication/interaction, writing, numeracy, technology, and critical analysis
- ❖ **A static condition.**
- ❖ Factors that impact health literacy include our health status, our experiences and knowledge, language skills, aging process, cultural beliefs and values, and emotions

Jessica Ridpath, Research Communications Coordinator, Group Health Research Institute, Presentation Introduction to Health Literacy and Plain Language, September 2009

### Health Care Utilization

- Low Health Literacy associated with
  - increased hospitalization
  - greater emergency care use
  - lower use of mammography
  - lower receipt of influenza vaccine

Health Literacy Interventions and Outcomes: An Updated Systematic Review. AHRQ 2011 <https://www.ahrq.gov/downloads/pub/evidence/pdf/literacy/literacyup.pdf>

## Health Care Outcomes

- Lower Health literacy was associated with
  - higher risk of mortality for seniors
  - poorer ability to demonstrate taking medications appropriately
  - poorer ability to interpret labels and health messages
  - poorer overall health status among seniors

Health Literacy Interventions and Outcomes: An Updated Systematic Review. AHRQ 2011 <https://www.ahrq.gov/downloads/pub/evidence/pdf/literacy/literacyup.pdf>

## Which Patients Are at Risk for Low Health Literacy?

- Anyone in the U.S.
  - Not a function of age, race, education, income or social class
- Ethnic and racial minority groups
  - Disproportionately affected by low health literacy
  - Carry a disproportionate burden of diabetes
- White, native born Americans
  - Comprise the majority of people with low health literacy
- Older patients, recent immigrants, people with chronic diseases and those with low socioeconomic status
  - Especially vulnerable to low health literacy

"The Health Literacy of America's Adults: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy" U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, September 2006.

## Some Health Literacy Challenges

### Population Changes

- The elderly population is growing
- The number of Americans with limited English proficiency is growing

### Health System Complexity

- The number of medications prescribed has increased
- Hospital stays are shorter
- Heavier reliance on forms, written directions
- Greater self-care requirements
- Verbal instructions are often complex, delivered rapidly, and easy to forget in a stressful situation

The National Patient Safety Foundation

## Assessment of Health Literacy

### WRAT: wide range achievement test

- Word recognition test

### REALM: rapid assessment of adult literacy in medicine

- Word recognition test

### TOFHLA: test of functional health literacy in adults

- Reading passage comprehension
- Prompts of how to interpret instructions

### S-TOFHLA: short - Test of functional health literacy in adults

- Contains 2 reading comprehension scores

AHRQ. Literacy and Health Outcomes. Evidence Report/Technology Assessment Number 87. 2004.

## What about giving tests to assess health literacy?

- Tests measure reading ability
  - not ability to synthesize information and apply to own health care situation.
  - Does not measure numeracy or communication and listening skills
- Useful in research and in programs where there is a desire to establish literacy level of participants
  - for example to design materials or approaches

## AMA HEALTH LITERACY VIDEO

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy  
 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
 May 2010

Some basic principles:

- (1) Everyone has the right to health information that helps them make informed decisions.
- (2) Health literacy is part of a person-centered care process and essential to the delivery of cost effective, safe, and high-quality health services.
- (3) Since it is impossible to tell by looking who is affected by limited health literacy, a “universal precautions approach” should be adopted. Clear communication should be the basis for every health information exchange.

Some strategies to Improve Communication

- Adopt Universal Precautions
- Ask Me Three
- Teach Back

“Universal Precautions” Means...

- Expect that every encounter is at risk for miscommunication.
- Create a “shame-free” environment of care.
  - Treat all patients equally
  - Anticipate communication barriers
  - Communicate clearly with everyone
  - Confirm understanding with everyone
  - Proactively work to minimize barriers

DeWalt DA, Callahan LF, Hawk V, Brouckow KA, Hink A, Rusd R, et al. Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit. Rockville (MD): Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; 2010.

Opportunities for Effective Communication

Use “living room” language

- Use plain, non-medical language and common words when communicating with patients

Analgesic	Medicine to treat pain
Communicable	Can be pass to other people and make them sick
Dosage	How much medicine you should take
Hypertension	High blood pressure; your heart is working too hard to move blood around your body
Intermittent	From time to time
Screening	A medical test that checks for a certain health problem

Weiss, Barry MD. Health literacy and patient safety: Help Patients Understand. AMA Foundation, May 2007. New Jersey Health Literacy Coalition

Other Common Medical Words Patients with Limited Health Literacy May Not Understand

- Atherosclerosis
- Bolus
- Carbohydrate
- Dialysis
- Edema
- Glucose
- Gram
- Insulin
- Lipid
- Nephrologist
- Neuropathy
- Non-invasive
- Pre-diabetes
- Retina

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (NDIC) Diabetes Dictionary. <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/diabetes/ndic/dictionary/>. Service of National Institutes of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Opportunities for Effective Communication

- Organize your information so that the most important points come first
  - limit information to 3-5 key points.
- Create a shame free environment :
  - educate your staff about effective ways to communicate with patients
  - why it’s important to routinely offer to help everyone with forms and questionnaires
- Do the necessary calculations for your patients, since many individuals have difficulty with math
  - for example, speak of a 20 pound weight loss rather than a 10% weight reduction

### Ask Me Three

- Educational program that encourages patients and families to ask 3 questions during encounters
- Frame your conversation to provide these answers
- Can order posters and flyers for waiting areas
  - National Patient Safety Foundation and Institute for Healthcare Improvement
- Encourage and invite patients to ask questions. You might even say “It’s okay for you to ask me questions.”



**A Clear Health Communication Intervention**

*Ask Me 3* promotes three simple but essential questions that patients should ask their providers in every health care interaction:

- 1. What is my main problem?** (Focus on diagnosis or major presenting problem)
- 2. What do I need to do?** (Discussion of doctor’s instructions)
- 3. Why is it important for me to do this?** (Provide context for instructions and compliance)

### Ask Me Three example

Pt on warfarin with a fib

**① What is my main problem?**

- Your heart does not have a regular beat, it is irregular -which is called atrial fibrillation. Because the beat is not regular, a clot could form in the heart which could lead to a stroke.

### Ask Me Three example

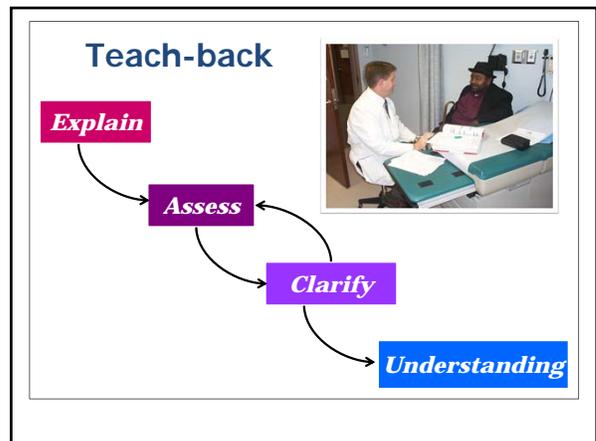
**② What do I need to do?**

- You will need to take a blood thinner, warfarin, to keep a clot from forming. You will need regular blood tests so we can keep your blood levels in a safe range. You will also need to be aware of some foods that might cause a problem for your blood levels.

### Ask Me Three example

**③ Why is it important for do this?**

- Keeping your blood level in the safe range, which is between 2.0 and 3.0, can reduce the chance you will have a stroke or a bleeding problem



### Teach-back is....

- Asking patients to repeat in their own words what they need to know or do, in a non-shaming way.
- NOT a test of the patient, but of how well you explained a concept
- A chance to check for understanding and, if necessary, re-teach the information.

### Teach-back

- Creates an opportunity for dialogue in which the provider gives information, then asks the patient to respond and confirm understanding *before* adding any new information
  - Re-phrase if a patient is not able to repeat the information or demonstrate accurately
  - Ask the patient to teach back the information again *using their own words*, until you are comfortable they really understand it
  - If they still do not understand, consider other strategies

### Asking for a Teach-back - Examples

Ask patients to demonstrate understanding, *using their own words*:

- "I want to be sure I explained everything clearly. Can you please explain it back to me so I can be sure I did?"
- "What will you tell your husband about the changes we made to your blood pressure medicines today?"
- "We've gone over a lot of information, a lot of things you can do to get more exercise in your day. In your own words, please review what we talked about. How will you make it work at home?"

### Teach-back – Additional Points

- Do not ask yes/no questions like:
  - "Do you understand?"
  - "Do you have any questions?"
- For more than one concept:
  - "Chunk and Check"
    - Teach the 2-3 main points for the first concept & check for understanding using teach-back...
    - Then go to the next concept

### It's Harder than You Think to Understand Medications

- Reviewing medications with patients is one of the most important uses of teach back.
  - A study found that for 144 patients averaging 6.5 prescriptions, it took 2.6 teach-back tries for the patients to correctly explain how and when to take their medications.

Kevin B. O'Reilly, *The ABCs of Health Literacy*. American Medical News, amednews.com. March, 19, 2012.

### TEACH BACK VIDEO

### In Conclusion

- Health literacy is a shared responsibility between patients, healthcare consumers and providers
- We all benefit from information presented in a clear, understandable way regardless of our literacy levels
- Health literacy enables individuals to make decisions and then take actions that promote and maintain their health and the health of their families.

### Questions?

- IF you are interested in establishing a health literacy program at your institution, education modules and toolkits are available
  - MN and NJ Health Literacy Coalitions
- AHRQ
- Ask me 3

### AHRQ quick start guide



### Resources

AHRQ's Pharmacy Health Literacy Center	<a href="http://www.ahrq.gov/pharmhealth/">http://www.ahrq.gov/pharmhealth/</a>
BP Waiver Card	<a href="http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hpwaiver.htm">http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hpwaiver.htm</a>
AHRQ Health Literacy and Cultural Competence Page	<a href="http://www.ahrq.gov/browse/hltx.html#Literacy">http://www.ahrq.gov/browse/hltx.html#Literacy</a>
American Medical Association Foundation	<a href="http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/ama-foundation/our-programs/public-health/health-literacy-program.shtml">http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/ama-foundation/our-programs/public-health/health-literacy-program.shtml</a>
Ask Me 3	<a href="http://www.npsf.org/askme3/">http://www.npsf.org/askme3/</a>
Health Literacy Statistics	<a href="http://www.npsf.org/askme3/pdfs/STATS_GLANCE">http://www.npsf.org/askme3/pdfs/STATS_GLANCE</a>
CDC's Health Literacy web site	<b>web site:</b> <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy">http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy</a> <b>blogs:</b> <a href="http://blogs.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/">http://blogs.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/</a>
Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patients Understand	<a href="http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/ucpladmm/367/healthliticians.pdf">http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/ucpladmm/367/healthliticians.pdf</a>
Health Literacy Studies	<a href="http://www.hugh.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/index.html">http://www.hugh.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/index.html</a>
Reference Directive	<a href="http://www.ihathhealth.org/standard-form/">http://www.ihathhealth.org/standard-form/</a> <a href="http://www.carrigrifs.org">http://www.carrigrifs.org</a>

### Resources

Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit	<a href="http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/healthliteracytoolkit.pdf">http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/healthliteracytoolkit.pdf</a>
Medical Library Association	<a href="http://www.mtlnet.org/resources/healthlit/">http://www.mtlnet.org/resources/healthlit/</a>
Movement for Canadian Literacy	<a href="http://www.literacy.ca/about/about.htm">http://www.literacy.ca/about/about.htm</a>
National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy	<a href="http://health.gov/communication/HActionPlan/">http://health.gov/communication/HActionPlan/</a>
National Institute for Literacy	<a href="http://www.nifl.gov/">http://www.nifl.gov/</a>
Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.health.gov">http://www.health.gov</a>
Office of Minority Health	<a href="http://www.omhrc.gov/">http://www.omhrc.gov/</a>
Project Read	<a href="http://www.jctmc.com/AHRQ-Project-Read/">http://www.jctmc.com/AHRQ-Project-Read/</a>
New Jersey Health Literacy Coalition (NJHLCC)	<a href="http://www.njhealthliteracy.org">http://www.njhealthliteracy.org</a>