

## Health Literacy Toolkit

### National Network of Libraries of Medicine, Southeastern Atlantic Region

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#### Articles

- Koh, HK, Brach, C, Harris, L, Parchman, ML. A Proposed 'Health Literate Care Model' Would Constitute a Systems Approach to Improving Patients' Engagement in Care. *Health Affairs*. 2013 February; 32(2). 357-367.
- Serper M, Patzer RE, Curtis LM, Smith SG, O'Connor R, Baker DW, Wolf MS. Health Literacy, Cognitive Ability, and Functional Health Status among Older Adults. *Health Serv Res*. 2014 Jan 30. doi: 10.1111/1475-6773.12154. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 24476068
- Stacey D, Légaré F, Col NF, Bennett CL, Barry MJ, Eden KB, Holmes-Rovner M, Llewellyn-Thomas H, Lyddiatt A, Thomson R, Trevena L, Wu JH. Decision Aids for People Facing Health Treatment or Screening Decisions. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2014 Jan 28;1:CD001431. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD001431.pub4. PubMed PMID: 24470076
- Weiss BD. How to Bridge the Health Literacy Gap. *Fam Pract Manag*. 2014 Jan-Feb;21(1):14-8. PubMed PMID: 24444618
- Berkman ND, Sheridan SL, Donahue KE, Halpern DJ, Crotty K. Low health literacy and health outcomes: an updated systematic review. *Ann Intern Med*. 2011 Jul 19;155(2):97-107. Review. PubMed PMID: 21768583.
- Car J, Lang B, Colledge A, Ung C, Majeed A. Interventions for enhancing consumers' online health literacy. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2011 Jun 15;(6):CD007092. Review. PubMed PMID: 21678364.
- Chinn D. Critical health literacy: a review and critical analysis. *Soc Sci Med*. 2011 Jul;73(1):60-7. Epub 2011 May 12. Review. PubMed PMID: 21640456.
- Donovan-Kicken E, Mackert M, Guinn TD, Tollison AC, Breckinridge B, Pont SJ. Health Literacy, Self-Efficacy, and Patients' Assessment of Medical Disclosure and Consent Documentation. *Health Commun*. 2011 Nov 22. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 22107084.

- Easton P, Entwistle VA, Williams B. "Health in the 'hidden population' of people with low literacy. A systematic review of the literature." *BMC Public Health*. 2010 Aug 5; 10:459. Review. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2923110/?tool=pubmed>
- Farrell TW. Review of a geriatric health literacy workshop for medical students and residents. *J Am Geriatr Soc*. 2011 Dec;59(12):2347-9. doi:10.1111/j.1532-5415.2011.03720.x. Epub 2011 Oct 31. PubMed PMID: 22092069.
- Ghaddar SF, Valerio MA, Garcia CM, Hansen L. Adolescent health literacy: the importance of credible sources for online health information. *J Sch Health*. 2012 Jan;82(1):28-36. doi: 10.1111/j.1746-1561.2011.00664.x. PubMed PMID: 22142172.
- Hardie NA, Kyanko K, Busch S, Losasso AT, Levin RA. Health literacy and health care spending and utilization in a consumer-driven health plan. *J Health Commun*. 2011;16 Suppl 3:308-21. PubMed PMID: 21951260.
- Health Literacy Innovations: understanding health literacy/Health literacy <http://www.healthliteracyinnovations.com/information/>
- Houts PS, Doak CC, Doak LG, Loscalzo MJ. "The role of pictures in improving health communication: a review of research on attention, comprehension, recall, and adherence." *Patient Education and Counseling*. 2006 May; 61(2):173-90.

The goal of this article was to assess the effects of pictures on health communications. The authors found that "pictures closely linked to written or spoken text can, when compared to text alone, markedly increase attention to and recall of health education information. All patients can benefit, but patients with low literacy skills are especially likely to gain. Patients with very low literacy skills can be helped by spoken directions plus pictures to take home as reminders, or by pictures plus very simply worded captions" (article abstract).

- Lindquist LA, Go L, Fleisher J, Jain N, Friesema E, Baker DW. Relationship of Health Literacy to Intentional and Unintentional Non-Adherence of Hospital Discharge Medications. *J Gen Intern Med*. 2011 Oct 5. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 21971600.
- Macabasco-O'Connell A, Fry-Bowers EK. Knowledge and perceptions of health literacy among nursing professionals. *J Health Commun*. 2011;16 Suppl 3:295-307. PubMed PMID: 21951259.
- Mancuso L. Overcoming health literacy barriers: a model for action. *J Cult Divers*. 2011 Summer;18(2):60-5. PubMed PMID: 21744676.
- Marvanova M, Roumie CL, Eden SK, Cawthon C, Schnipper JL, Kripalani S. Health literacy and medication understanding among hospitalized adults. *J Hosp Med*. 2011 Nov;6(9):487. doi: 10.1002/jhm.998. PubMed PMID: 22139905.
- Osborne, Helen. A compilation of health literacy articles. Health Literacy Consulting: Articles. <http://www.healthliteracy.com/articles.asp>
- Safer, Richard S. and Jann Keenan. "Health Literacy: The Gap Between Physicians and Patients." *American Family Physician*. 2005 Aug 1; 72(3): 463-468. <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2005/0801/p463.html>

Arguing that inadequate health literacy can result in “difficulty accessing health care, following instructions from a physician, and taking medication properly,” this article offers suggestions to health professionals on how to help patients who struggle with low literacy (article abstract).

- Syurina EV, Brankovic I, Probst-Hensch N, Brand A. Genome-based health literacy: a new challenge for public health genomics. *Public Health Genomics*. 2011;14(4-5):201-10. Epub 2011 Jul 5. PubMed PMID: 21734434.
- Vernon, John A (lead author). Low Health Literacy Implication for National Health Policy [http://www.npsf.org/askme3/pdfs/Case\\_Report\\_10\\_07.pdf](http://www.npsf.org/askme3/pdfs/Case_Report_10_07.pdf)
- Zamora H, Clingerman EM. Health literacy among older adults: a systematic literature review. *J Gerontol Nurs*. 2011 Oct;37(10):41-51. doi10.3928/00989134-20110503-02. Epub 2011 May 18. Review. PubMed PMID: 21634314.

## Booklets and Brochures Available on the Web

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Quick Guide to Health Literacy. <http://www.health.gov/communication/literacy/quickguide/healthinfo.htm>

This guide provides a summary of best practices in health communication that can aid in improving health literacy. It is intended for government employees, grantees and contractors, and community partners working in healthcare and public health fields.

- American Medical Association. *Health Literacy and patient safety: Help patients understand*. 2nd edition. May 2007. <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/367/healthlitclinicians.pdf>

This booklet “reviews the problem of health literacy, its consequences for the health care system, and the likelihood that a clinician’s practice includes patients with limited literacy” (p. 7). The booklet also offers practical suggestions to clinicians and concludes with case discussions.

- Barrett SE, Puryear JS, Westpheling K. *Health Literacy Practices in Primary Care Settings: Examples from the Field*. January 2008. <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Content/Publications/Fund-Reports/2008/Jan/Health-Literacy-Practices-in-Primary-Care-Settings--Examples-From-the-Field.aspx>
- Berkman ND, DeWalt DA, Pignone MP, Sheridan SL, Lohr KN, Lux L, Sutton SF, Swinson T, Bonito AJ. *Literacy and Health Outcomes. Evidence Report/Technology Assessment No. 87*. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. January 2004. <http://www.ahrq.gov/downloads/pub/evidence/pdf/literacy/literacy.pdf>

This report on literacy and health outcomes was requested by the American Medical Association and funded by the AHRQ. The report addresses two key questions:

1: Are literacy skills related to: (a) Use of health care services? (b) Health outcomes? (c) Costs of health care? (d) Disparities in health outcomes or health care service use according to race,

ethnicity, culture, or age?

**2:** For individuals with low literacy skills, what are effective interventions to: (a) Improve use of health care services? (b) Improve health outcomes? (c) Affect the costs of health care? (d) Improve health outcomes and/or health care service use among different racial, ethnic, cultural, or age groups? (p. 5)

- Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc. *Health Literacy Fact Sheets*, 1-9.  
[http://www.chcs.org/usr\\_doc/Health\\_Literacy\\_Fact\\_Sheets.pdf](http://www.chcs.org/usr_doc/Health_Literacy_Fact_Sheets.pdf)

This series of nine fact sheets was created for those who are designing patient education materials for consumers with low health literacy skills. The sheets define health literacy, describe its impact on health outcomes, provide strategies to prepare appropriate educational materials to assist low-literate consumers, and provide resources for additional health literacy information and publications.

- Crea, Kathleen. *Health Literacy Sources: A Guide for Health Professionals*. Jan. 2006.  
<http://library.uchc.edu/eduoff/healthliteracy.pdf>

Kathleen Crea compiled a list of websites of health literacy resources for health professionals and patients and families.

- Federal Drug Administration (FDA): *Quick Information for Your Health*.  
<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/default.htm>

The FDA provides easy-to-read health brochures in English and Spanish. Brochures are available in both HTML and PDF formats and topics include keeping food safe, diabetes, losing weight safely, giving medication, etc.

- Institute of Medicine. *Health Literacy, eHealth, and Communication: Putting the Consumer First. Workshop Summary*. <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2009/Health-Literacy-eHealth-and-Communication-Putting-the-Consumer-First-Workshop-Summary.aspx>
- Institute of Medicine. *The Safe Use Initiative and Health Literacy: A Workshop. Workshop Summary*. <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/The-Safe-Use-Initiative-and-Health-Literacy-A-Workshop.aspx>
- Jacobson KL, Gazmararian JA, Kripalani S, McMorris KJ, Blake SC, Brach C. Is Our Pharmacy Meeting Patients' Needs? A Pharmacy Health Literacy Assessment Tool User's Guide. (Prepared under contract No. 290-00-0011 T07.) AHRQ Publication No.07-0051. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. October 2007. <http://www.ahrq.gov/QUAL/pharmlit/pharmlit.pdf>

This assessment tool was designed for use in a specific environment—the outpatient pharmacies of large, urban, public hospitals that primarily serve a minority population with a high incidence of chronic disease and limited health literacy skills. Users wishing to assess a different type of organization or pharmacy environment may use this assessment tool as a template and add, omit, and adapt items as appropriate.

- The Joint Commission. "What did the Doctor say?:" *Improving health literacy to protect patient safety*. 2007. [http://www.jointcommission.org/What\\_Did\\_the\\_Doctor\\_Say/](http://www.jointcommission.org/What_Did_the_Doctor_Say/)

This booklet is the culmination of a roundtable discussion addressing health literacy. Believing that many people play a role in improving health literacy, the roundtable discussion offers methods for tackling the underlying problems of health literacy, the impact of low health literacy and patient safety, and the current state of health care communication.

- MAXIMUS and CFK National Program Office. *The Health Literacy Style Manual: covering kids and families*. 2005. <http://coveringkidsandfamilies.org/resources/docs/stylemanual.pdf>

This booklet has suggestions for developing and improving print materials related to government programs. Strategies include writing and formatting specifically for clients, many of whom have limited literacy skills.

- Medical Library Association. *Deciphering Medspeak Brochures*. July 2007. <http://www.mlanet.org/resources/medspeak/index.html>. Brochures.

These brochures help consumers translate "medspeak," the specialized language of health professionals. Written in English and Spanish, these brochures address HIV/AIDS, stroke, eye disease, heart disease, diabetes, and breast cancer.

- National Center for Education Statistics. *The Health Literacy of America's Adults: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy*. September 2006. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006483>.

The Health Literacy of America's Adults is the first release of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) health literacy results. The results are based on assessment tasks designed specifically to measure the health literacy of adults living in the United States. Health literacy was reported using four performance levels: Below Basic, Basic, Intermediate, and Proficient. The majority of adults (53 percent) had Intermediate health literacy. About 22 percent had Basic and 14 percent had Below Basic health literacy. Relationships between health literacy and background variables (such as educational attainment, age, race/ethnicity, where adults get information about health issues, and health insurance coverage) were also examined and reported.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Simply Put: A Guide for Creating Easy-to-Understand Materials*. April 2009, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. [http://simply\\_put.pdf](http://simply_put.pdf)

The guidance in this booklet helps the user transform complicated scientific and technical information into communication materials your audiences can relate to and understand. The guide provides practical ways to organize information and use language and visuals. The guide can be useful for creating fact sheets, FAQ's,, brochures, booklets, pamphlets, and other materials, including web content.

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. *Quick Guide to Health Literacy*.  
<http://www.health.gov/communication/literacy/quickguide/Quickguide.pdf>

This guide contains a basic overview of key health literacy concepts and techniques for improving health literacy through communication, navigation, knowledge-building, and advocacy. It provides the information needed to become an effective advocate for improved health literacy.

## Books

- Institute of Medicine. Roundtable on Health Literacy. Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice. *Informed Consent and Health Literacy: Workshop Summary*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2015. <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/19019/informed-consent-and-health-literacy-workshop-summary>
- Institute of Medicine. Roundtable on Health Literacy. Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice. *Health Literacy and Numeracy: Workshop Summary*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2014. <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/18660/health-literacy-and-numeracy-workshop-summary>
- Committee on Health Literacy Board on Neuroscience and Behavioral Health. *Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2004. [http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=10883](http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=10883)

Taking social, cultural, and educational issues into consideration, the Committee on Health Literacy demonstrates the problems of health literacy, its origins, consequences, and solutions. The report defines health literacy as “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions” (p. 2). The committee also suggests a strategy to improve health literacy in the United States.

- Davis, CM; *Patient Practitioner Interaction: An Experiential Manual for Developing the Art of Health Care*. 2011. Amazon link: [http://www.amazon.com/Patient-Practitioner-Interaction-Experiential-Developing/dp/1556429940/ref=zg\\_bs\\_227666\\_6](http://www.amazon.com/Patient-Practitioner-Interaction-Experiential-Developing/dp/1556429940/ref=zg_bs_227666_6)
- Hernandez, L.; Roundtable on Health Literacy. Institute of Medicine. *Health Literacy, eHealth, and communication: putting the consumer first: Workshop Summary*. 2009. [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=12474](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12474)
- *The Medical Library Association guide to health literacy* / edited by Marge Kars, Lynda M. Baker, and Feleta L. Wilson. Published/Created: New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, c2008. Description: xiv, 314 p: ill. ; 23 cm.

This seminal work is densely packed with thorough literature reviews but also many practical suggestions. A valuable reference work giving medical librarians and other health professionals the state of the research in this field. Case studies illustrate best practices, including ways to

partner with health care providers and other organizations to create and fund health literacy programming in your community and make your library a vital player in this increasingly important information needs area.

- *Photonovels Through Critical Pedagogy: A Consciousness Raising Health Literacy Project With ESL Speaking Immigrant Women* [Laura Nimmon](#) VDM Verlag, Germany 2009

The author a PhD student at the University of British Columbia where she works towards improving the health literacy levels of marginalized groups. This study was awarded a Canadian Population and Public Health Masters Research Award. To post your photonovel go to <http://www.photonovela.com>

- *Toward Health Equity and Patient-Centeredness: Integrating Health Literacy, Disparities Reduction, and Quality Improvement: Workshop Summary*, by Roundtable on Health Disparities, Forum on the Science of Health Care Quality Improvement and Implementation, Roundtable on Health Literacy, and Institute of Medicine (Paperback - Feb. 25, 2009) [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=12502](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12502)
- Osborne, Helen. *Health Literacy from A to Z: Practical Ways to Communicate Your Health Message*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Sudbury, Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2011.

Osborne argues that health providers face two problems: “recognizing when patients do not understand written words . . . [and] knowing how to communicate through words, pictures, computers screens, and other visual media” (p. xiii). She focuses on helping solve these two issues and providing practical suggestions to health providers and others who communicate health information. Designed as a “tool of action,” Each chapter provides the reader with starting points, strategies, ideas, solutions, and sources to learn more about health literacy. Chapters include consumer health libraries, hearing and communicating with people who are deaf and hard of hearing, language and culture, pictographs, plain language, signs, stories, website design, and word choice.

- Zarcadoolas, Christina, Andrew F. Pleasant, and David S. Greer. *Advancing Health Literacy: A Framework for Understanding and Action*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Acknowledging the consequences of low health literacy and the complexity of medicine and health, the goal of this book is to answer the following question: “How can this model of health literacy and the literacy principles it outlines improve the daily performance of health professionals and health programs in their efforts to advance individual and public health literacy?” (p. xvi). The authors define health literacy as “the ability to understand, evaluate, and act on spoken, written, and visual health information to reduce risk and live a healthier life” (p. xvi).

## **Culture, Diversity, Language, and Working with Minority Communities**

- Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organization, Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/AAPCHO>

- Culturally Competent Care - A Narrated video presentation  
<http://ethnomed.org/clinical/mental-health/Culturally-Competent-Care-Boynton.flv/view>

This 25-minute video slide presentation talk was given by psychiatrist Lorin Boynton at Harborview Psychiatry, Chief Resident Conference, to teach about approaches to providing culturally competent care to immigrant and refugee patients.

- Culturally Competent Practice with Latino Families Developed for the Georgia Division of Family and Children's Services (DHR): [http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/DHR-DFCS/DHR\\_DFCS-Edu/Files/Latino%20Module%201%20participant%20guide%204-25-07.pdf](http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/DHR-DFCS/DHR_DFCS-Edu/Files/Latino%20Module%201%20participant%20guide%204-25-07.pdf)
- Demographics and Health Care Access and Utilization of Limited-English-Proficient and English-Proficient Hispanics: [http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data\\_files/publications/rf28/rf28.pdf](http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data_files/publications/rf28/rf28.pdf)
- Ethnomed: <http://ethnomed.org/>

Contains information about cultural beliefs, medical issues and related topics pertinent to the health care of immigrants to Seattle or the US, many of whom are refugees fleeing war-torn parts of the world.

- The Healthy Aboriginal Network: <http://www.thehealthyaboriginal.net/>

The Healthy Aboriginal Network is a non-profit promotion of health, literacy & wellness for aboriginal youth. Topics include: diabetes prevention, suicide prevention, gambling addiction, and staying in school.

- Healthy Roads Media: <http://www.healthyroadsmedia.org/ipodvideos.htm>

Health information access is a basic healthcare need. Literacy, health-literacy, illness, aging, disability and language are all issues that can pose barriers to obtaining basic health information. This site contains free health education materials in a number of languages and a variety of formats.

- Hospital, Language, and Culture:  
[http://www.jointcommission.org/daily\\_update/joint\\_commission\\_daily\\_update.aspx?k=644](http://www.jointcommission.org/daily_update/joint_commission_daily_update.aspx?k=644)

This webpage has research concerning meeting diverse patient needs.

- HRSA Free Online Training: <http://www.hrsa.gov/publichealth/healthliteracy/index.html> Unified Health Communication 101: Addressing Health Literacy, Cultural Competency, and Limited English Proficiency
- Integrating Literacy, Culture, and Language to Improve Health Care Quality for Diverse Populations: <http://www.cpehn.org/pdfs/Integrating%20Literacy%20Paper%20-%20Andrulis.pdf>
- The Minnesota Alliance for Patient Safety: Created some very streamlined and readable consent form templates in multiple languages. They share PDFs of their templates at [http://www.mnpatientsafety.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=85&Itemid=69](http://www.mnpatientsafety.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=85&Itemid=69)

- The Provider's Guide to Quality and Culture: Getting to Know Hispanic/Latino Culture: <http://erc.msh.org/mainpage.cfm?file=5.4.5a.htm&module=provider&language=English>
- SPIRAL: Selected Patient Information Resources in Asian Languages <http://spiral.tufts.edu/index.html>
- Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care (Fri, 25 Jan 2008 15:13:31 -0500) <http://media.nap.edu/podcasts/nax50unequaltre.mp3>

Racial and ethnic disparities in health care are known to reflect access to care and other issues that arise from differing socioeconomic conditions. The podcast provides a brief glimpse at how disparities in treatment may arise in health care systems and looks at aspects of the clinical encounter that may contribute to such disparities.

## Presentations

- Agency for Healthcare and Research Quality (AHRQ), **Quick Tips—When Talking with Your Doctor** <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/quicktips/doctalk.htm>

Research has shown that patients who have good relationships with their doctors tend to be more satisfied with their care—and to have better results. The above sites discuss tips to help consumers and their doctor become partners in improving health care.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **Health Literacy for Public Health Professionals** <http://www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing/healthliteracy/training/>

This training program introduces participants to the fundamentals of health literacy and demonstrates its importance within public health practice. The content spurs students to think about the significance of health literacy in the work done as public health professionals. It provides practical steps to apply the principles and strategies of health literacy in your daily activities.

- Health Literacy Consulting, **Health Literacy Podcasts:** <http://www.healthliteracyoutloud.com/>

This site contains podcast interviews conducted by health literacy expert and consultant, Helen Osborne, with those in-the-know about health literacy. Examples include health literacy and chronic disease, hospital interest in health literacy, and use humor and graphics in conveying health information.

- Health Literacy Wisconsin, **4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Wisconsin Health Literacy Summit** <http://dhsmedia.wi.gov/main/Catalog/pages/catalog.aspx?catalogId=83c8f2bd-6299-431e-9df4-460efbfcde64>

Health Literacy Wisconsin regularly makes all of the videos and Power Point slides from the conference presentations available for all to download or access online. Topics range from basic introductions to best practices in collaborations to using the Teach-Back method and beyond.

- Iowa Department of Public Health, **Plain & Simple: Health Communication Workshop.**  
[http://www.idph.state.ia.us/health\\_literacy/common/pdf/psworkshop.pdf](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/health_literacy/common/pdf/psworkshop.pdf)

The objectives of this presentation include learning about health literacy, plain language, and suggestions for improving sample documents.

- University of Michigan, Taubman Health Sciences Library, **Michigan Health Literacy Awareness Training Program**  
<http://www.slideshare.net/umhealthscienceslibraries/health-literacy-2361414>

MHLATP is a collaborative project between the University of Michigan Health Sciences Libraries and Washtenaw Literacy. Their goal is to raise awareness among health professionals of the issue of low literacy and poor health literacy among their patients, and to provide communication techniques and resources to improve patient care.

- National Institute of Literacy, **Advancing Health Literacy: Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners** <http://lincs.ed.gov/webcasts/health08/webcast0916.html>

Sponsored by the National Institute of Literacy, this 2008 webcast features Ian Bennett, M.D., Ph.D. of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine and Graduate School of Education; Susan R. Levy, Ph.D. of the University of Illinois at Chicago; and Andrew Pleasant, Ph.D. of Rutgers University, and moderator Sandra L. Baxter, Ed.D. discuss new and emerging topics in health literacy.

- National Network of Libraries of Medicine, Southeastern/Atlantic Region *Beyond the SEA* webinar series archived presentation, **Health Literacy for Health Sciences Librarians**  
<https://webmeeting.nih.gov/p39502650/>

This archived webinar, originally presented in December 2011, featured speaker, Paula G. Raimondo, MLS, AHIP, Head, Liaison & Outreach Services at the Health Sciences & Human Services Library at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. Covered are health literacy facts and figures, the effects of low literacy on patient behavior and health, guidelines for clear health communication and literacy evaluation tools.

- National Institutes of Health, **Proceedings of the Surgeon General's Workshop on Improving Health Literacy**  
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/healthliteracy/toc.html>

On September 7, 2006, Acting Surgeon General Kenneth Moritsugu held a Surgeon General's Workshop on Improving Health Literacy. The goal of the workshop was to present the state of the science in the field of health literacy from a variety of perspectives, including those of health care organizations and providers, the research community, and educators. During the course of

the one-day workshop, participants identified the public health consequences of limited health literacy and established an evidence base for taking action.

- World Education, **Health Literacy: New Field, New Opportunities**  
<http://www.healthliteracy.worlded.org/docs/tutorial/SWF/flashcheck/main.htm>

This online tutorial is designed for health and literacy educators interested in getting more involved in health literacy work. Users learn about the challenges associated with low health literacy, meet some of the new health literacy practitioners in the field, hear about successful strategies and practices, and apply what they have learned to a challenging health literacy scenario. The tutorial was developed by World Education and funded by the National Network of Libraries of Medicine New England Region (NN/NL NER).

## Toolkits

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, **AHRQ Pharmacy Health Literacy Center:**  
<http://www.ahrq.gov/pharmhealthlit/index.html#pharmlitqi>

This site provides pharmacists with recently released health literacy tools and other resources from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). These include 1) *Health Literacy Tools*, which includes a “Training Program for Pharmacy Staff on Communication” where the “Strategies to Improve Communication Between Pharmacy Staff and Patients” program from the 2011 edition of this toolkit will be found as well as a “Guide on How to Create a Pill Card” and other tools, 2) *Curricular Modules for Pharmacy Faculty*, a set of modules to help pharmacy faculty integrate health literacy and quality improvement into courses, experiential education, and projects for PharmD students and pharmacy residents, and 3) *Resources* for pharmacists interested in understanding more about health literacy.

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, **Effective Health Care Program:**  
<http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov>

AHRQ is the lead Federal agency charged with improving the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans. As one of 12 agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, AHRQ supports health services research that will improve the quality of health care and promote evidence-based decision making. AHRQ’s Effective Health Care Program reviews and synthesizes published and unpublished scientific evidence, generates new scientific evidence and analytic tools, and compiles research findings that are synthesized and/or generated and translates them into useful formats for clinicians, consumers, and policy makers. Consumer guides are written in plain language and summarize research reviews, which are also available.

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, **Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit**

<http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/literacy>

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality commissioned the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to develop and test this Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit. The toolkit offers primary care practices a way to assess their services for health literacy considerations, raise awareness of the entire staff, and work on specific areas. Additional resources related to the toolkit can be found here: <http://www.nchealthliteracy.org/toolkit/>

- American Medical Association, **Health Literacy Kit**

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/ama-foundation/our-programs/public-health/health-literacy-program/health-literacy-kit.shtml>

Using a multimedia approach focused on health professionals, the American Medical Association (AMA) uses real-life scenarios and statistics to address the problems of health literacy. They define health literacy as “the ability to read, understand, and act on medical information” (DVD). Understanding the need for more research on health literacy, the AMA gives several ideas to enable health professionals to help their patients understand the health information given. These suggestions include offering an open and shame free environment, an attitude of helpfulness, and a place where patients feel safe. The AMA Foundation Health Literacy Kit costs \$35 and includes a manual, Continuing Medical Education credit, and two videos/DVDs, Low Health Literacy: You Can't Tell By Looking and Health Literacy: Help Your Patients Understand. Both videos can be viewed free of charge from: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/no-index/about-ama/8035.shtml>

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: **Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective**

<http://www.cms.gov/WrittenMaterialsToolkit/>

This 11-part Toolkit provides a detailed and comprehensive set of tools to help you make written material in printed formats easier for people to read, understand, and use.

- Hablamos Juntos, **It's More Than Words: Developing Useful Health Care Materials for Spanish Speaking Patients**: [http://hablamosjuntos.org/pdf\\_files/HJMoreThanWords.pdf](http://hablamosjuntos.org/pdf_files/HJMoreThanWords.pdf)

Hablamos Juntos is a project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and administered by the UCSF Fresno Center for Medical Education & Research. Its mission is to improve communication between health care providers and their patients with limited English proficiency.

- Hablamos Juntos, **Universal Symbols for Health Care**

<http://hablamosjuntos.org/signage/default.index.asp>

Using symbols for health care signage can successfully meet the wayfinding needs of patients that speak hundreds of different languages. This site is designed for health care facilities and graphic designers interested in learning about and using newly developed health care symbols for wayfinding programs.

- Harvard School of Public Health Health Literacy Studies, **Practice: Strategies and Tools**  
<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/practice/>

Harvard School of Public Health's Health Literacy Studies focuses on communication and literacy skills and are interested in exploring the pathways from education to health outcomes. Resources include a slide presentation, video, a chart about health literacy, literature, and how to create and access print materials.

- Medical Library Association, **Health Information Literacy**  
<http://www.mlanet.org/resources/healthlit/index.html>

This site offers a plethora of resources for health professionals and consumers and includes links and information to fact sheets, brochures, toolkits, and project ideas for health literacy. A corresponding CD version available from the Medical Library Association (MLA) also explains the resources from MLA and outside sources.

- Public Health Information Partners, **Health Literacy: Tools for Improving Health Communications** (2007)  
<http://library.nymc.edu/PHInformatics/hltoolkit.cfm>

Beginning 2004, the New York Medical College, School of Public Health and Health Sciences Library created Public Health Information Partners, an academic/local partnership with health professionals in the seven counties comprising the Hudson Valley Region of New York State. This toolkit is from a conference held May 30, 2007 at New York Medical College, Valhalla, NY. The conference goal was to provide health professionals and hospital staff with an educational opportunity to develop awareness of health literacy issues and improve communication skills with individuals throughout the Hudson Valley Region of New York. This toolkit offers links to websites that promote health literacy skills.

- Covering Kids & Families, **The Health Literacy Style Manual** (2005)  
<http://www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org/resources/docs/stylemanual.pdf>

*Covering Kids & Families* (<http://www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org/>) is a national program supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with direction provided by the Southern Institute on Children and Families. This style manual is designed for health and human service agencies that want to create easy-to-read materials about their organizations or programs. Included are useful images of before-and-after examples.

- Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, **Virginia Adult Education Health Literacy Toolkit** (2004)  
<http://www.valrc.org/>

Answering questions such as what is health literacy and what resources are available, this Toolkit is a resource to help adult education instructors and administrators better understand the problem of health literacy as it affects their learners. It is designed to support creative approaches to help learners increase health literacy as they engage in sound, productive adult

literacy instruction. Information and resources are provided to educate the educator about health care in the United States and cultural issues relating to health, and to simplify creation of health lessons and curricula for teachers and programs. Many online and print resources are available.

## Websites

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, **Health Literacy and Cultural Competency**  
<http://www.ahrq.gov/browse/hlitix.htm>

Online resources and pathfinders relating to health literacy, cultural competency consumer decision aids, clinical information, and improving healthcare delivery. [English and Spanish]

- American College of Physicians Foundation, **Health Literacy Programs**  
<http://www.acpfoundation.org/health-literacy-programs/>

This foundation, dedicated to helping patients get the information they need to manage their health, offers several health literacy resources: information on the Medication Labeling Project which began in 2004 to examine medication labels through the lens of health literacy; Patient Materials from full health-topic guides to simple tools to convey health information; Information from ACP Foundation conferences; and tools from the Information Rx collaboration with the National Library of Medicine.

- Harvard School of Public Health: **Additional Resources for Creating and Assessing Materials**  
<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/practice/additional-resources-for-creating-and-assessing-materials/index.html>
- Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP), **Health Communication, Health Literacy and e-Health:**  
<http://www.health.gov/communication/Default.asp>

Improving health communication and utilizing health technologies are essential to promoting individual and population health. The ODPHP has pulled together key tools, research and reports, and resources for public health and health communication professionals with topic headings: Health Communication, Health Literacy, e-Health, and Healthy People Health Communication & Health IT.

- Health Literacy Consulting, **Helping Organizations Communicate in Ways People Can Understand**  
<http://www.healthliteracy.com/default.asp>

Helen Osborne, the developer of this website, directs health care professionals and consumers to a variety of health literacy resources. Osborne also offers ideas on how to celebrate health literacy month.

- **Health Literacy Missouri**  
<http://www.healthliteracymissouri.org/>

HLM works to improve the health of Missourians by closing the gap between patient skills and the demands of the health care system. The HLM website serves as a rich resource, housing more than 10,000 health literacy toolkits, articles and other materials as well as their *Plain Talk Blog*: <http://www.healthliteracymissouri.org/news-and-events/blog>

- **Health Literacy Wisconsin**  
<http://www.healthliteracywisconsin.org/>

Wisconsin Literacy is recognized nationally for raising awareness of the importance of health literacy skills and fostering two-way communication between adult literacy agencies and healthcare providers. This website offers a wealth of resources including health care and adult literacy curricula, everyday tools to promote health literacy, examples of easy-to-read materials, information on regional initiatives and much more.

- Institute for Healthcare Advancement, **Health Literacy**  
<http://www.ih4health.org/default.aspx/MenuItemID/184/MenuGroup/ Home.htm>

Recognizing the problems caused by low health literacy, the IHA joined the fight against it with a number of resource-rich initiatives addressed on this site: Rewrite/Redesign of health materials, “What to do for Health” series of easy-to-read books, materials, resources and presentations from the IHA Annual Health Literacy Conference, and the Health Education Literacy Program (HELP) which teaches reading and health together.

- MedlinePlus, **Easy-to-Read**  
[http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/easytoread/easytoread\\_a.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/easytoread/easytoread_a.html)

Developed by the National Institutes of Health and National Library of Medicine, MedlinePlus helps consumers find up-to-date, quality information about health topics, herbs and drugs. Information is available in English, Spanish, and Easy-to-Read versions. Also see health topic, *Health Literacy*: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthliteracy.html>

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, **National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy**  
<http://www.health.gov/communication/HLActionPlan/>

This plan seeks to engage organizations, professionals, policymakers, communities, individuals, and families in a linked, multisector effort to improve health literacy. The plan is based on the principles that (1) everyone has the right to health information that helps them make informed decisions and (2) health services should be delivered in ways that are understandable and beneficial to health, longevity, and quality of life. The vision informing this plan is of a society that: provides everyone with access to accurate and actionable health information, delivers person-centered health information and services and supports lifelong learning and skills to promote good health.

- National Institute on Aging, NLM, NIH, and USDHHS, **NIH Senior Health**  
<http://nihseniorhealth.gov>

This website from the National Institute on Aging and National Library of Medicine has easy-to-read health information and videos for senior citizens.

- National Network of Libraries of Medicine, **Health Literacy**  
<http://nnlm.gov/outreach/consumer/hlthlit.html>

Funded by the National Library of Medicine, this website defines health literacy and lists health literacy organizations and websites.

- National Patient Safety Foundation, **Ask Me 3**  
<http://www.npsf.org/for-healthcare-professionals/programs/ask-me-3/>

This website helps consumers and providers learn how to communicate effectively with each other, address the problem of health literacy, and provide a solution to end health literacy. Ask Me 3 helps consumers ask three questions to their provider about their health: 1) What is my main problem?

2) What do I need to do? 3) Why is this important for me to do this?

- PlainLanguage.gov, **Popular topics: Improving Health Literacy**  
[http://www.plainlanguage.gov/populartopics/health\\_literacy/index.cfm](http://www.plainlanguage.gov/populartopics/health_literacy/index.cfm)

PLAIN, the Plain Language Action and Information Network, sponsors this site and its goal is to promote the use of “plain language” for all government communications. Plain language (also called Plain English) is communication an audience can understand the first time they read or hear it.

- World Education, **Health & Literacy Special Collection: Tools and Resources for Health Literacy Initiatives**  
<http://healthliteracy.worlded.org>

The Health & Literacy Special Collection is created, compiled, and updated by World Education with support from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and their LINCS Project. Information includes health lessons, easy-to-read material, multilingual health information, and health literacy research.

## Useful Examples

- American College of Physicians Foundation, **Materials and Guides**  
<http://www.acpfoundation.org/materials-and-guides/>

ACPF has created free videos for patients on a variety of topics. ACPF also offers free Health Tips pads on many health topics – English and Spanish versions can be printed online or ordered free of charge in packs of 50. Patient Guides on Living with Diabetes and Living with COPD are available in boxes of 25 or 50 for a charge plus shipping & handling.

- Covering Kids & Families, **The Health Literacy Style Manual** (2005)  
<http://www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org/resources/docs/stylemanual.pdf>

*Covering Kids & Families* ([coveringkidsandfamilies.org](http://coveringkidsandfamilies.org)) is a national program supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with direction provided by the Southern Institute on Children and Families. This style manual is designed for health and human service agencies that want to create easy-to-read materials about their organizations or programs. Included are useful images of before-and-after examples.

- National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse, **Easy-to-Read Publications**  
<http://www2.niddk.nih.gov/HealthEducation/HealthEzToRead.htm>

These easy-to-read materials on Diabetes, Digestive Diseases, Kidney Diseases, and Urologic Diseases are written in English and Spanish and are available from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

- National Institutes on Aging, **Understanding Alzheimer's Disease** (2006)  
<http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/understanding-alzheimers-disease>

Developed by Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral Center (ADEAR), this booklet offers easy-to-read information about Alzheimer's Disease. ADEAR also offers an easy-to-read booklet on Understanding Memory Loss.

- Medical University of South Carolina, **Hands on Health, South Carolina**  
<http://www.handsonhealth-sc.org>

The purpose of Hands on Health South Carolina is to give South Carolinians a place to go to learn about health and wellness in an easy-to-read format. Health problems addressed include diabetes, heart disease, cancer, asthma, stroke, and suicide.

- Plain Language Medical Dictionary Widget – University of Michigan Taubman Health Sciences Library  
<http://www.lib.umich.edu/plain-language-dictionary>

The Plain Language Medical Dictionary widget is a project of the University of Michigan Taubman Health Sciences Library as part of the Michigan Health Literacy Awareness project. To use, click on the drop down menu to browse the list of high-level medical terms. Once a word or phrase is selected, the plain language translation will appear in the box. You can also get the code to place the widget on your web page.

- READ Saskatoon, **Baby and Me** (Second Edition - 2006)  
<http://www.readsaskatoon.com/pubs/babyme/babyme.pdf>

Developed by READ Saskatoon, this easy-to-read book divides pregnancy into 3 trimesters. Each section explains what to expect for the mother and her growing baby.

- South Carolina DHEC, Medical University of South Carolina, and REACH 2010, **My Guide to Sugar Diabetes** (Third Edition – 2004)  
<http://etl2.library.musc.edu/reach/materials/booklet.pdf>

Developed by the South Carolina Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, the Diabetes Initiative of South Carolina, and the Enterprise/MUSC Neighborhood Health Program in collaboration with other public health and human service agencies, this guide has easy-to-read information about Sugar Diabetes.

- US Dept. of Health & Human Services Office on Women's Health, **A Lifetime of Good Health: Your Guide to Staying Healthy**  
<http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/lifetime-good-health/>

From womenshealth.gov and available for women, girls, and moms-to-be in English and Spanish, this publication offers a guide to lifetime health for women in an easy-to-read format.

## Tests to Assess Health Literacy

- AdultMeducation.com, **Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (Revised) (REALM-R)**  
[http://www.adultmeducation.com/downloads/REALMR\\_INSTR.pdf](http://www.adultmeducation.com/downloads/REALMR_INSTR.pdf)

The REALM-R is a brief screening instrument used to assess an adult patient's ability to read common medical words. It is designed to assist medical professionals in identifying patients at risk for poor literacy skills. The REALM-R is a word recognition test – not a reading comprehension instrument. Adults are asked to de-code or pronounce words. The test takes less than 2 minutes to administer and score.

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, **CAHPS Item Set for Addressing Health Literacy** (2010)  
[http://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/content/products/HL/PROD\\_HL\\_Intro.asp?p=1021&s=215](http://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/content/products/HL/PROD_HL_Intro.asp?p=1021&s=215)

The Item Set for Addressing Health Literacy consists of 29 supplemental items designed for use with the CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey. (The Spanish version of the item set has an additional item about the availability of forms in Spanish.) The items address the following six topic areas: communication with doctors, communication about health problems and concerns, communication about medicines, communication about tests, communication about forms, and disease self-management. [English and Spanish] The CAHPS Item Set for Addressing Health Literacy also includes a tool developed by AHRQ and the AMA called the Health Literacy Quality Improvement Crosswalk. It pairs CAHPS Item Set questions with AMA Recommendations for healthcare worker practices that will improve the health literacy of their patients:

[https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/CAHPSkit/files/1311\\_About\\_Health\\_Lit.pdf](https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/CAHPSkit/files/1311_About_Health_Lit.pdf)

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, **Health Literacy Measurement Tools**  
<http://www.ahrq.gov/populations/sahlsatool.htm>

AHRQ (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality) researchers developed two tools to measure an aspect of health literacy—individuals' reading comprehension in a medical context. The REALM (Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine) and the SAHLSA (Short Assessment of Health Literacy for Spanish Adults) are available from this site. Both assessments can be administered and scored in under 2 minutes by personnel with minimal training, making it easy to use in clinical settings.

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, **Is our Pharmacy Meeting Patients' Needs? [Pharmacy Health Literacy Assessment Tool – User's Guide]**  
<http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/pharmlit/>

This pharmacy health literacy tool was designed to get input from three critical audiences - objective auditors, pharmacy staff, and patients. The three parts of the assessment are complementary and designed to form a comprehensive assessment. Although the assessment was designed to be used in outpatient pharmacies of large, urban, public hospitals that primarily serve a minority population, it can be adapted for use in other pharmacy and non-pharmacy environments.

- Peppercorn Books, **Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults (TOFHLA)**  
[http://www.peppercornbooks.com/catalog/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=2514](http://www.peppercornbooks.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=2514)

The TOFHLA measures the functional literacy level of patients, using real-to-life health care materials. These materials include patient education information, prescription bottle labels, registration forms, and instructions for diagnostic tests. The TOFHLA assesses two main constructs, numeric and reading comprehension; it has a total of 67 items. The numeric scale, used to measure the ability to read and understand numbers, includes 17 items; the reading comprehension scale, used to measure the patient's ability to read and understand health care-related passages, contains 50 items. There is also a Spanish version called TOFHLA-S. A sample sheet in English can be found at:

[http://www.peppercornbooks.com/catalog/pdf/tofhla\\_eng\\_12pt\\_websmpl.pdf](http://www.peppercornbooks.com/catalog/pdf/tofhla_eng_12pt_websmpl.pdf)

- Pfizer, **The Newest Vital Sign (NVS): A Health Literacy Assessment Tool**  
<http://www.pfizerhealthliteracy.com/public-policy-researchers/NewestVitalSign.aspx>

The Newest Vital Sign is a bilingual (English and Spanish) screening tool that identifies patients at risk for low health literacy. The tool can be administered in a clinical setting in just three minutes. The test result provides information about the patient that will allow providers to appropriately adapt their communication practices in an effort to achieve better health outcomes.

- Western Psychological Services, **Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised (WRAT-4 or WRAT-IV)**  
[http://portal.wpspublish.com/portal/page?\\_pageid=53,118660&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL&cmp=20\\_google&kw=wratt%204&gclid=CI0ds57FIZ8CFZZ75QoddRVIMw](http://portal.wpspublish.com/portal/page?_pageid=53,118660&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&cmp=20_google&kw=wratt%204&gclid=CI0ds57FIZ8CFZZ75QoddRVIMw)

The Fourth Edition of this classic test measures the basic academic skills of reading, spelling, and mathematical computation necessary for effective learning, communication, and thinking. The latest edition features an entirely new subtest, Sentence Comprehension, to enhance the scope of the content assessed and to meet the need for a measure of reading comprehension. It is helpful in diagnosing learning disabilities, assessing academic progress over time, evaluating achievement/ability discrepancies, checking progress in remedial programs, determining instructional needs, and assessing children whose performance is below that of their peers.