Introduction to Health Literacy

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Dental Project Coordinator
Health Literacy

99% of Americans can read

BUT

only 12% are Health Literate
What is Oral Health Literacy?

The ability to read, understand, and act on oral health information to make appropriate oral health decisions

Keys to oral health literacy:
1. How to use the oral health care system
2. Basic oral health knowledge
Based on Numerous Studies on Oral Health Literacy

› The General Public:
  ‣ Does not understand how to prevent dental caries.
  ‣ Does not know what fluoride is or what it does.
  ‣ Does not know what sealants are or what they are used for.

› Health Providers:
  ‣ Many, including dentists and dental hygienists, do not have a good understanding about how to prevent tooth decay.
  ‣ Most health care providers do not use recommended communication techniques.
The public and health care providers are largely unaware of the basic risk factors and prevention for many oral diseases:

- The fact that dental caries is both infectious and preventable
- The relationship between good oral health and well-being
The Importance of Oral Health Literacy

- Literacy skills are **a stronger predictor** of oral health status than age, income, employment status, education level, or racial/ethnic group.

- Nationally only 44% of adults with low health literacy skills had a dental visit in the previous year compared with 77% of those with proficient health literacy skills.

- Low oral health literacy is associated with increased caries severity and increased failed appointments/no shows.

- One in five American adults reads at a 5\textsuperscript{th} grade level or below. The average American reads at the 8-9\textsuperscript{th} grade level. Most health materials, however, are written above 10\textsuperscript{th} grade level.
Risks of Low Health Literacy

People with low health literacy:

- Are less able to care for their chronic conditions.
- Use more healthcare services to treat complications of disease.
- Are less likely to use preventive health services.
- Are more likely to engage in unsafe or inappropriate use of prescription or over-the-counter medications.
- Have higher mortality rates.
Examples of Health Literacy:

- Knowing how to locate and navigate a health facility
- Reading, understanding, and completing many kinds of forms to receive treatment or deal with insurance
- Making appointments
- Articulating their own signs and symptoms
- Understanding the information you give
- Reading and following instructions
- Understanding medication bottles
- Knowing about different types of health professionals and what services they provide and how to access those services
- Ability to read and understand food labels
- Making health care decisions
Oral Health Literacy and Early Childhood Caries (ECC)

Knowledge Needed to Prevent ECC

- Importance of oral health
- Dental caries can be prevented.
- Fluorides prevent dental caries.
- The level of fluoride in their drinking water
- Most bottled water is fluoride deficient.
- When to use which fluorides
- When to take child to the dental office

Skills Needed to Prevent ECC

- How to routinely clean the infant’s/child’s mouth
- How to recognize normal/abnormal teeth (decalcification)
- How to re-mineralize decalcified surfaces
- How to inspect the child’s mouth
- How to administer fluoride properly
- How to limit the type and amount of sweets
How Many Steps to Fulfill an Appointment?

3
• Call to make an appointment and navigate the phone system.
• Fill out necessary paperwork.
• Prepare for appointment: medication list, directions.

3
• Drive to the clinic.
• Follow the signs to the right clinic section.
• Check in at the front desk.

4
• Review of medical history and reason for visit
• Primary care and oral health exams
• Motivational interviewing and self-management goals

3
• Make treatment decisions.
• Check out at the front desk and make next appointment.
• Try to start new routine with the self-management goals.

=13 steps!
Overwhelmed?

TO-DO LIST:

1. Everything

2.  

3.  

(Word on whiteboard is 'Everything')
So How Do You Know if Someone has Low Health Literacy?

You Don’t!
Health Literacy
Universal Precautions
Health Literacy Universal Precautions

Assume that all patients may have some difficulty understanding health information and accessing health services.

› Minimize the risk of miscommunication:
  • Simplify communication.
  • Know your audience!
  • Confirm comprehension.

› Make the office environment easier to navigate.

› Support patients' efforts to improve their health through patient engagement.
Careless Communication

DONT LET WORRIES KILL YOU LET THE CHURCH HELP

WASH & VACUUM SENIOR CITIZENS $15.95

UNDERSTANDING ANY TIME
Assessing Health Literacy

- **Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Dentistry (REALD-30):** Requires patients to read and pronounce common dental terms. It has been used to assess health literacy among many different patient populations.

- **Brief Questionnaire:** 16 questions asking the patient's opinion on their ability to complete common health care tasks such as filling out forms and reading prescription labels.

- **Newest Vital Sign (NVS):** Asks the patient to read and answer questions about ice cream food labels (calculations).

- **Test of Functional Health Literacy in Dentistry (TOFHiD):** Uses healthcare materials to screen numeracy and reading comprehension.
# IHS Early Testing for Health Literacy

## REALM Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adequate Health Literacy</th>
<th>Low Health Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine

**REALM®**

Terry Davis, PhD, Michael Crouch, MD, Sandy Long, PhD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient Name</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Grade Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Examiner</th>
<th>Reading Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## List 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fat</td>
<td>fatigue</td>
<td>allergic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flu</td>
<td>pelvic</td>
<td>menstrual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pill</td>
<td>jaundice</td>
<td>testicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dose</td>
<td>infection</td>
<td>colitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>exercise</td>
<td>emergency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stress</td>
<td>behavior</td>
<td>medication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smear</td>
<td>prescription</td>
<td>occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nerves</td>
<td>notify</td>
<td>sexually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>germs</td>
<td>gallbladder</td>
<td>alcoholism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meals</td>
<td>calories</td>
<td>irritation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disease</td>
<td>depression</td>
<td>constipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cancer</td>
<td>miscarriage</td>
<td>gonorrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caffeine</td>
<td>pregnancy</td>
<td>inflammatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attack</td>
<td>arthritis</td>
<td>diabetes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kidney</td>
<td>nutrition</td>
<td>hepatitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hormones</td>
<td>menopause</td>
<td>antibiotics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>herpes</td>
<td>r.pendix</td>
<td>diagnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seizure</td>
<td>abnormal</td>
<td>potassium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bowel</td>
<td>syphilis</td>
<td>anemia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asthma</td>
<td>hemorrhoids</td>
<td>obesity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rectal</td>
<td>nausea</td>
<td>osteoporosis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of (+) Responses in List 1:</th>
<th># of (+) Responses in List 2:</th>
<th># of (+) Responses in List 3:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raw Score __________________________
IHS Early Testing for Health Literacy

NVS Test

Adequate Health Literacy

Low Health Literacy

Figure 1A. The newest vital sign — English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition Facts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servings per container</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount per serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories 250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat 13g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat Fat 9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol 28mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium 55mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Carbohydrate 30g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Fiber 2g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars 23g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein 4g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 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.


Note: This slide contains the final English version of the newest vital sign. The type size should be 14-point (as shown above) or larger. Patients are presented with the above scenario and asked the questions shown in Figure 1B.

Figure 1B. Questions and answers score sheet for the newest vital sign — English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>1. If you eat the entire container, how many calories will you eat?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>1,000 is the only correct answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>2. If you are allowed to eat 60 g of carbohydrates as a snack, how much ice cream could you have?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Any of the following is correct:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 cup or any amount up to 1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Half the container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
<td>If patient answers &quot;2 servings,&quot; ask &quot;How much ice cream would that be if you were to measure it into a bowl?&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>3. Your doctor advises you to reduce the amount of saturated fat in your diet. You usually have 42 g of saturated fat each day, which includes 1 serving of ice cream. If you stop eating ice cream, how many grams of saturated fat would you be consuming each day?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>33 is the only correct answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>4. If you usually eat 2500 calories in a day, what percentage of your daily value of calories will you be eating if you eat one serving?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>10% is the only correct answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>5. Is it safe for you to eat this ice cream?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>6. (Ask only if the patient responds &quot;no&quot; to question 5): Why not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because it has peanut oil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Correct
Assessing Health Literacy

- OR you can use simple observation:
  - Hand a brochure to the patient upside down and see if he or she correctly aligns the page in order to read it.
  - Ask the patient if the print on the brochure is clear enough to read.
  - Determine if the patient registration form or others forms are filled out completely and correctly.
  - Notice if the patient gives excuses when asked to read something (e.g., forgot reading glasses, has a headache).
  - Observe if the patient gives medical brochures or materials to person accompanying them.
  - Verify the patient can describe how to take medications.
How to Use Universal Precautions

Understanding Health Information

Navigating the Health System

Engaging in Self Care
Understanding Health Information
Plain Language Is:

- Organizing information so that the most important points come first.
- Breaking complex information into understandable chunks.
- Using commonly known and understood words and terms.
- Eliminating non-essential info.

Plain Language Is Not:

- “Dumbing-down”.
- Talking down to a person.

The goal is to communicate at a 6-8th grade reading level.
Choosing Words

‣ Use simpler words (1-2 syllables).
‣ Use familiar words (avoid jargon and legalese).
Choosing Words

Gingiva
Gums

Caries
Cavities
Choosing Words

Assistance

Help

Bacteria

Germs
Navigating the Health System
# Navigating the System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When is my next appointment?</td>
<td>Who will be treating me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do I go for care?</td>
<td>What are they going to do at my dental appointment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do I have to fill out all these forms?</td>
<td>How can I get to my appointment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I go after work?</td>
<td>How do I pay for my appointment?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Engaging in Self Care
Engaging in Self-Care

› Combining a patient’s knowledge, skills, ability, and willingness to take action to manage his own health and care
Patient Engagement

- Taking medications as prescribed
- Making healthy food choices
- Becoming physically active
- Avoiding unhealthy activities
- Practicing good hygiene
- Obtaining preventive care
- Showing up for appointments!
Patient Engagement and You

- Involve the patient in the conversation.
  - Ask what he is already doing.
  - Listening is important!
  - Provide encouragement.
  - Share resources.

- Motivational Interviewing!

Big Ears to listen, Big Eyes to See and a Small Mouth to Speak
Health Literacy Best Practices

- Appointment reminders
- Phone follow-up
- Confirm understanding (Teach-Back Method—see January 2018 webinar)
- Plain Language
- Motivational interviewing
- Shared decision-making
- Kind, supportive staff
Citations


Thank You!

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