



Health Literacy

Presented by:

The California-Nevada Public Health Training Center

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California-Nevada Public Health Training Center

- **Collaboration of:**
 - California State University Fullerton, Dept. of Health Science
 - Loma Linda U., School of Public Health
 - San Diego State U., Grad. School of Public Health (lead)
 - U. of Nevada Las Vegas, School of Community Health Sciences
- **Goal:**
 - Strengthen performance in the core functions and delivery of essential services among public health workers in CA and NV
- **Website:**
 - <http://www.ca-nvpublichealthtraining.org/>

CALIFORNIA-NEVADA Public Health Training Center

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Provider pending approval by the California Board of Registered
Nursing, Provider No. CEP 5694 for [2 hours] Contact Hours
CHES/MCHES Contact Hours: [2 hours]

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Learning Objectives

After this tutorial you will be able to...

1. Describe reasons health literacy is a mainstream priority
2. Describe the factors that affect health literacy
3. Describe the link between health literacy and health outcomes

Topics Covered

- Health Literacy: A Mainstream Priority
- Information Processing Theory
- What affects Health Literacy?
- Role of Communication Skills
- Role of Knowledge
- Role of Language Proficiency
- Role of Culture
- Tools for Assessing Health Literacy
- Health Literacy in Practice

HEALTH LITERACY

Health Literacy: A Mainstream Priority

- The Institute of Medicine (2004) published a report entitled, *Health literacy: A prescription to end confusion* that stated millions of Americans cannot read complex texts, cannot write, and have difficulty understanding and following directions
- Only 12% of adult population are proficient in health literacy

Defining 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 care decisions”

(Ratzan & Parker, 2000, p. vi)

Prevalence of Limited Health Literacy

Limited health literacy affects everyone but is more common in the following:

- Low socioeconomic status
- Lower education
- Older person
- Chronically ill
- Minority populations



Consequences of Limited Health Literacy

- Medical/medication errors
- Lack of knowledge about health promotion behaviors/underutilization of preventive behaviors/ineffective chronic disease management
- Frequent use of emergency rooms/readmissions
- Fragmented care/poor navigation
- Miscommunication between patients and health care professionals

Consequences of Limited Health Literacy

- Negative health outcomes
- High mortality rate
- Excessive costs
- Somers and Mahadevan (2010) estimated the annual cost of these consequences to the U. S. economy at \$106 to \$236 billion



INFORMATION PROCESSING THEORY

Information Processing theory

- How do we process or understand information?
- Units of sound (phonemes) and meaning (morphemes)
- Sight, smell, taste, and textures
- Ignore information or recognize information
- Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

Information Processing Theory

- Simple communication
- Attention-grabbing message
- Give information in small chunks
- Decision rules and heuristics

WHAT AFFECTS HEALTH LITERACY?

What affects Health Literacy?

- Communication Skills
- Knowledge
- Language Proficiency
- Culture



ROLE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Role of Communication Skills

- Do health professionals and lay people have different styles of communication?
- Communication skills are needed to:
 - Explain how you're feeling
 - Read your doctor's instructions or food label
 - Write medical history on forms



"Well, yes, I suppose I could explain the test results in 'plain English' — but then you'd know how sick you are."

ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE

Role of Knowledge

- Level of knowledge on various health topics
- Out dated or misinformation
- Understanding mathematical concepts

ROLE OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Role of Language Proficiency

- 20.3% of US population aged 5 years or more speak another language besides English in the home (US Census, 2010)
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and the US Office of Minority Health
- National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care (CLAS)

ROLE OF CULTURE

Role of Culture

Importance of Socio-Cultural Competency

- What are their health beliefs, religious beliefs, or values?
- What are their ethnic, dietary, and interpersonal customs?
- Time orientation?
- Group orientation?



Role of Culture

- How do people evaluate given health information?
- When do they seek care?
- What are their preferences with health information?
- What are their expectations?
- Who do they trust?

Handout #1

- CLAS standards
(<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15>)

Exercise #1

- **What challenges do you see regarding health literacy and cultural groups?**

- Discuss one example of an issue with navigation
- Discuss one example of an issue with clinical health
- Discuss one example of an issue with public health



15-minute break



TOOLS FOR ASSESSING HEALTH LITERACY

Tools for assessing Health Literacy

- **REALM**
 - Rapid Assessment of Adult Literacy in Medicine
 - REALM-SF or REALM-R
- **TOFHLA**
 - Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults
 - TOFHLA-S, a validated Spanish translation version
 - S-TOFHLA- short form
 - Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults

Tools for assessing Health Literacy

- **NVS**
 - Newest Vital Sign
- **SAM**
 - Suitability Assessment of Materials
- **Health Literacy INDEX**
 - New Tool

Exercise #2

- Shame and Health Literacy
- Brown Bag Medication Review and Health Literacy

HEALTH LITERACY IN PRACTICE

Health Literacy in Practice

- Assess Health Literacy with an instrument (TOFHLA, S-TOFHLA, REALM, NVS)
- Plain language (layman's terms)
- Limit information
- Teach back method
- Ask questions (open ended questions)
- Patient friendly materials (illustrations, culturally sensitive)

Health Literacy in Practice

- Text4Baby health message program
- Listenability (Oral Communication)

“For everyone, everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right.... Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.”

— Kofi Annan

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