Question
Which of the following affects health literacy?

a. Communication skills of healthcare professionals
b. Level of complexity of health information
c. Information dissemination channels
d. All of the above

(CDC, n.d.)

Objectives
At the end of this presentation the attendee will be able to:
• Define health literacy
• Explain why health literacy is important
• Make use of health literacy assessment tools
What is health literacy?
The degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, communicate, process, and understand basic health information to make appropriate health decisions.

Why should you care about health literacy?
- Increased hospitalizations and emergency department visits
- Poorer health in general
- Misinterpretation of healthcare instructions and treatment

The National Assessment of Health Literacy
Assessment of health literacy in American adults 1993 and 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-184</td>
<td>Below basic</td>
<td>No more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185-225</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Skills necessary to perform simple and everyday literacy activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226-309</td>
<td>Intermediary</td>
<td>Necessary to perform moderately challenging literacy activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>310-500</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Necessary to perform more complex and challenging literacy activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Health literacy by gender

Health literacy by age

Health literacy by race/ethnicity
Health literacy by insurance

- Employee Insurance
- Military
- Medicare
- Medicaid
- No Insurance

Identifying patients with low health literacy

- Don’t assume
- There are many free health literacy assessment tools available

Health literacy tool shed

- Over 100 health literacy assessment tools
- Collaborative project
- Sponsored by the United States National Libraries of Medicine
- http://healthliteracy.bu.edu/all
**Short test of functional health literacy in adults (S-TOFHLA)**

Reading comprehension excerpt

Interpretation:
0-16 = inadequate literacy
17-22 = marginal literacy
23-36 = adequate literacy

(Baker, Williams, Parker, Gazmararian, & Nurss, J., 1999)

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**Rapid estimate of adult literacy in medicine (REALM)**

Interpretation
0-18 = < 3rd grade
19-44 = 4th-6th grade
45-60 = 7th-8th grade
61-66 = > 9th grade

(Murphy, Davis, Long, Jackson, & Decker, 1993)

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**The newest vital sign (NVS)**

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INTERPRETATION OF THE NVS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RAW SCORE</th>
<th>Literacy skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>Suggests high likelihood (50% or more) of limited literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Indicates the possibility of limited literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Almost always indicates adequate literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Short assessment of health literacy for Spanish adults (SAHLSA-50)

A score of < 37 suggests limited health literacy

Examples of SAHLSA-50

Abnormal  Empleo
diferente  similar  trabajo  educación
Short assessment of health literacy—Spanish and English (SAHL-S&E)

A score of < 14 suggests limited health literacy

(Shoou-Yih, Stucky, Lee, Rozier, & Bender, 2010)

3 item literacy screen

- How confident are you filling out medical forms by yourself?
- How often do you have someone help you read?
- How often do you have problems learning about your medical condition because of difficulty understanding written information?

(Chew et al., 2008)
Single item literacy screen (SILS)

How often do you need to have someone help you when you read instructions, pamphlets, or other written material from your doctor or pharmacy?

1- Never
2- Rarely
3- Sometimes
4- Often
5- Always

(Morris, MacLean, Chew, & Littenberg, 2006)

Single item health literacy screen in Spanish

¿Tan seguro(a) se siente al llenar formas usted solo(a)?

1- Completamente seguro(a)
2- Bastante seguro(a)
3- Algo seguro(a)
4- Un poco seguro(a)
5- Para nada

(Singh, Coyne, & Wallace, 2015)

Health literacy universal precautions

Consider that no patient will understand what you’re talking about

Utilize the AHRQ health literacy universal toolkit

Link:
The Triple Aim Initiative

- improving the patient experience
- improving the health of the population
- reducing the per capita cost of health care

Institute of Health Care Improvement. 2016

References


References (continued)
References (continued)


