

Health Literacy

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National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy



a US Department of Health and Human Services Initiative



Learning Objectives

- 1. define and understand Health Literacy
- 2. understand the **National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy** and identify several strategies for each Goal
- 3. explore ways to promote health literacy in your classroom/discipline

What is health literacy?

- **The degree to which individuals have the capacity to**
 - **obtain**
 - **process**
 - **understand**

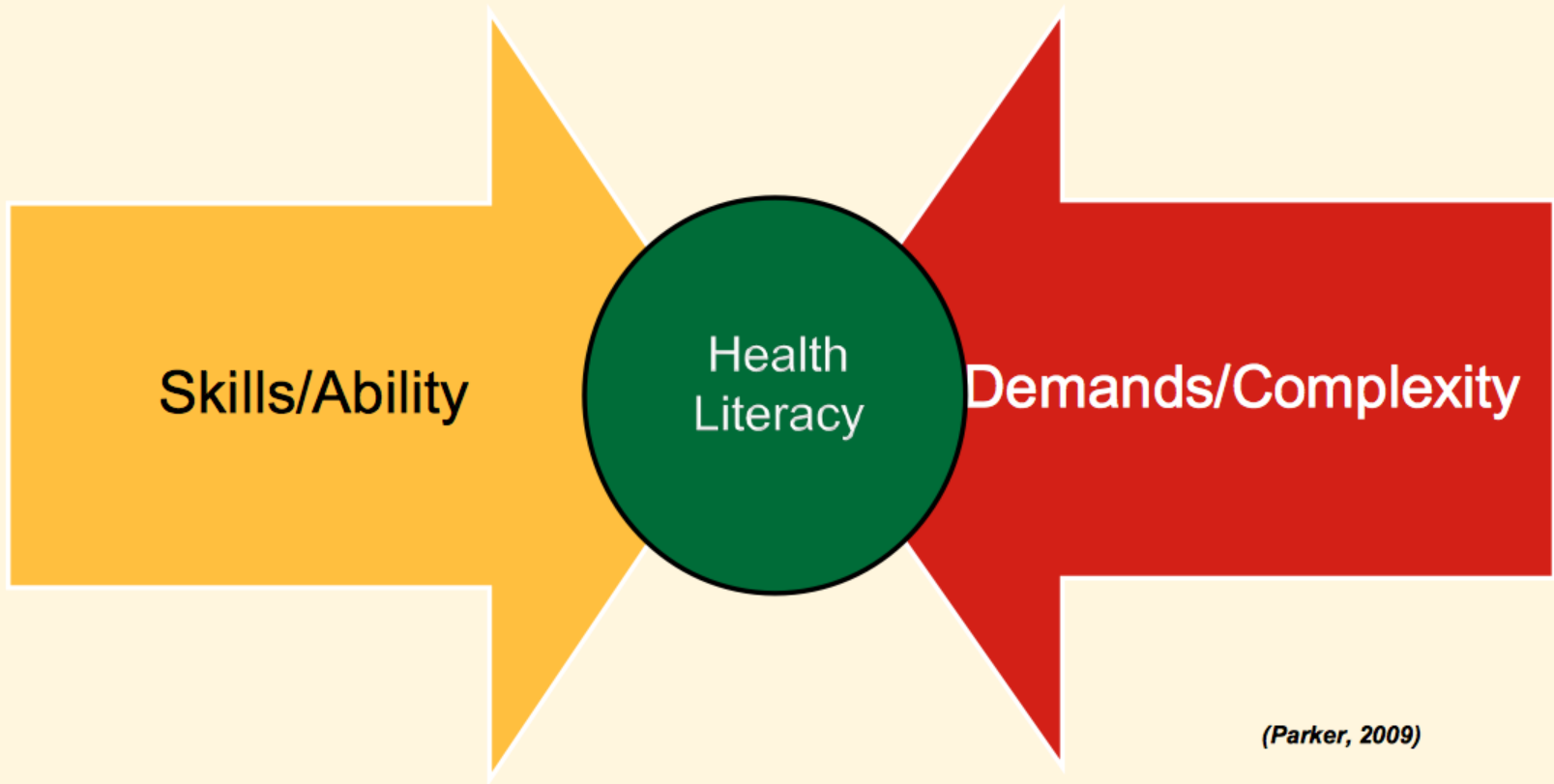
basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions (*Healthy People 2020*).

The responsibility of us, as health professionals, to communicate in plain language

Independent and Systemic factors

- Communication skills of laypersons and professionals
- Knowledge of health topics
- Culture
- Demands of health care/public health system
- Demands of situation/context

Health Literacy Framework



(Parker, 2009)



Why is health literacy important?

- People are better able to take action and promote their health and wellness
- It is fundamental to the success of patient-health professionals interactions
- Helps people to adopt healthy lifestyles when they receive:
 - accurate and easy-to-use information

Some examples of Health Literacy

- **Reading a nutrition label**
- **Getting a flu shot**
- **Managing a chronic illness**
- **Navigating the health care system**
- **And yes, math! Computing a medication dosage**

So, how are we doing?

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


Limited health literacy

- Disproportionately affects lower SES and minority groups
- Associated with:
 - Worse health outcomes
 - Higher health costs

Health Literacy is ONE tool to improve health

➤ Plain Language

➤ English is hard enough....

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- **The bandage was wound around the wound.**
 - **When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.**
 - **I did not object to the object.**
 - **The buck does funny things when the does are present.**
 - **Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.**

PLAIN Language

➤ Before and After....

Allergy Tablets

INDICATIONS: Provides effective, temporary relief of sneezing, watery and itchy eyes, and runny nose due to hay fever and other upper respiratory allergies.

DIRECTIONS: Adults and children 12 years and over—1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours, not to exceed 6 tablets in 24 hours or as directed by a physician. Children 6 to 11 years—one half the adult dose (break tablet in half) every 4 to 6 hours, not to exceed 3 whole tablets in 24 hours. For children under 6 years, consult a physician.

EACH TABLET CONTAINS: Chlorpheniramine Maleate 4 mg. **May also contain** (may differ from brand): D&C Yellow No. 10, Lactose, Magnesium Stearate, Microcrystalline Cellulose, Pregelatinized Starch.

WARNINGS: May cause excitability especially in children. Do not take this product unless directed by a physician, if you have a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis, or if you have glaucoma or difficulty in urination due to enlargement of the prostate gland. May cause drowsiness; alcohol, sedatives and tranquilizers may increase the drowsiness effect. Avoid alcoholic beverages, and do not take this product if you are taking sedatives or tranquilizers without first consulting your physician. Use caution when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery. As with any drug, if you are pregnant or nursing a baby, seek the advice of a health professional before using this product. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. In case of accidental overdose, seek professional assistance or contact a Poison Control Center immediately.

Store at controlled room temperature 2°-30°C (36°-86°F).

Use by expiration date printed on package.

Protect from excessive moisture.

For better identification keep tablets in carton until used.

Made in U.S.A.



Drug Facts

Active ingredient (in each tablet)

Chlorpheniramine maleate 2 mg.....Antihistamine

Purpose

Uses temporarily relieves these symptoms due to hay fever or other upper respiratory allergies: ■ sneezing ■ runny nose ■ itchy, watery eyes ■ itchy throat

Warnings

Ask a doctor before use if you have

- glaucoma
- a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis
- trouble urinating due to an enlarged prostate gland

Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are taking tranquilizers or sedatives

When using this product

- drowsiness may occur
- avoid alcoholic drinks
- alcohol, sedatives, and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness
- be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery
- excitability may occur, especially in children

If pregnant or breast-feeding, ask a health professional before use.

Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.

Directions

adults and children 12 years and over	take 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 12 tablets in 24 hours
children 6 years to under 12 years	take 1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 6 tablets in 24 hours
children under 6 years	ask a doctor

Drug Facts (continued)

Other information ■ store at 20-25°C (68-77°F) ■ protect from excessive moisture

Inactive ingredients D&C yellow no. 10, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, pregelatinized starch

Literacy and Health Outcomes

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
- Several instruments for measuring health literacy:
- **Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)** reading subtest.
- **Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM)**.
- **Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults (TOFHLA)**.

Knowledge and use of health care Services

- Mammography
- Cervical Cancer screening
- Childhood health maintenance procedures and parental understanding of child diagnosis and medication
- Emergency department discharge instructions
- "Heart Health" Knowledge
- Informed consent

Correlations (health services)

- All but Childhood health maintenance procedures and parental understanding of child diagnosis and medication showed a *statistically significant* association between **higher literacy level** and **knowledge of matters relating to use of these health services.**

Knowledge and outcomes of Health Behaviors or Conditions

- Smoking
- Contraception
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Postoperative care

Correlations (health outcomes)

- In general, these studies found *a positive, significant relationship* between **literacy level** and participants' **knowledge of** these health issues.

How can we assess health literacy?

➔ Assessing on the 'micro' level...

Chew's Three Screening Questions

(2004)

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

National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

Action on the Macro level



National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

Basic principles:

- everyone has the right to health information that helps them make informed decisions
- health services should be delivered in ways that are understandable and beneficial to health, longevity, and quality of life
- Support lifelong learning and skills to promote good health

The Action Plan

- a 67-page document
- Serves as a resource
- Gives background on the issue of Health Literacy
- Describes the *Road to the Plan*
- 7 Goals and numerous Strategies to assist with implementing them

Goal #1

➤ **Develop and disseminate health and safety information that is accurate, accessible, and actionable**

- Ensure that information is culturally and linguistically appropriate
- Leverage technology and e-health tools to deliver health information in formats that people want and need

Goal #2

- **Promote changes in the health care delivery system that improve health information, communication, informed decision-making, and access to health services**
- Explore options to support written and oral communication between patients and caregivers
- Use teach-back methods to improve understanding
- Advocate for continuing education training that is evidence-based

Goal # 3

➤ **Incorporate accurate, standards-based, and developmentally appropriate health and science information and curricula in child care and education through the university level**

- Provide opportunities for coursework in health education for all students
- Build partnerships with hospitals, clinics, health care providers, and educators
- Incorporate health education curricula with tasks, skills and examples

Goal # 4

- **Support and expand local efforts to provide adult education, English language instruction, and culturally and linguistically appropriate health information services in the community**
- Infuse health literacy skills into curricula for adult literacy, ESOL, family literacy programs
- Connect individuals with community resources

Goal # 5

➤ **Build partnerships, develop guidance, and change policies**

- Include health literacy in strategic plans, RFPs, grant awards, educational initiatives
- Facilitate sharing of resources and tools for improving health literacy
- Use census data to map health literacy
- Review, analyze and propose policy change as needed

Goal # 6

➤ **Increase basic research and the development, implementation, and evaluation of practices and interventions to improve health literacy**

- Develop methods to measure health literacy
- Study the economic impact of limited health literacy
- Assess barriers and strategies to improve access to health information

Goal # 7

➤ **Increase the dissemination and use of evidence-based health literacy practices and interventions**


- Engage practitioners, consumers and policy makers
- Emphasize dissemination as an essential step
- Increase resources for technical support and training
- Facilitate learning and changes in practice

To summarize: Key Principles

- Cross-disciplinary cooperation in necessary
- Strategically planned; evidence-based
- Evaluate and re-evaluate
- Continued public education
- Leverage public policy
- Involve communities and individuals

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