

Raise Awareness

Overview

Health literacy affects a patient's ability to access health care services, understand health-related information, and follow health care instructions. Therefore, limited health literacy should be an issue of concern for all clinical and administrative staff in your practice. Implementing health literacy universal precautions in your practice requires that all of your staff are aware of the problem, know how it affects your patients and consistently work to improve communication.

This tool provides you with several options for educating your staff including:

- Short sessions during a staff meeting.
- Lunch and learn sessions.
- Self-study for continuing education credit.

When planning for your education session, it is important to include time for group discussion so that practice staff can reflect on how health literacy issues impact patients.

Purpose

To provide options and consideration for raising your staff's awareness about health literacy.

Testimonial

“We had a lunch meeting to discuss health literacy and introduce this topic to the staff, most of whom had never heard the term before. I gave no formal introduction but rather told them we were going to watch a short video. I showed the 6-minute Health Literacy video, and as soon as it ended I was amazed at the reaction. The staff started talking about similar experiences they have had with our patients.

- “I knew that ‘Sally’ did not understand the changes that Dr. Dean made to her medicines; when she left the practice, she looked so bewildered.”
- “I once had a man get very angry and storm out of the office after I gave him our health history form. I later learned that he could not read.”

This video created such momentum. It was very easy to get the staff to work on these tools after watching it.”

-office manager, rural family practice

Action

- **Education Options.**

- ◇ **Video:** These videos include candid patient interviews about their experience and understanding of health-related information.
 - ◆ [Health Literacy Video](#) ⌚ (6 minutes)
 - ◆ [Help Patients Understand](#) ⌚ (23 minutes)
- ◇ **PowerPoint presentation:** [Health Literacy: Barriers and Strategies](#) 📄
This presentation includes 26 slides with speaker's notes that can be delivered in 30-40 minutes to a group or as a self-study program.
- ◇ **Group discussion.**
 - ◆ When planning your group education session, allow a few minutes at the end for group discussion on the topic. Refer to attached [Questions for Discussion](#) 📄 and [Moderator's Guide](#).📄
- ◇ **Self-study for continuing education credit.**
 - ◆ [Effective Communication Tools for Healthcare Professionals](#) 📺 is a 5-hour online learning course by the Department of Health and Human Services.
 - ◆ [Health Literacy and Public Health](#): 📺 Communicate to Make a Difference Series from the New York/New Jersey Public Health Training Center has 2 modules, each 1-2 hours long.

Tips ★

Suggestions for Education

- Schedule sessions at times that are convenient to most staff.
- Group sessions may create enthusiasm and motivate your staff better than individual self-study programs.
- Develop a plan for ongoing health literacy education that includes updates from your staff and health literacy team.

- ◇ **Continue education.**
 - ◆ Make sure to have a plan for revisiting the topic periodically and training new staff.
- ◇ **Other tools for raising awareness.**
 - ◆ Share results from the [Prevalence Calculator](#), 📺 which

estimates the percentage of patients in your practice who may have difficulty understanding medical information.

Track Your Progress

- **Assess your education plans.**
 - ◇ Document the number of staff completing the health literacy training.
 - ◇ Confirm that health literacy education is offered to staff on an ongoing basis.

Resources

- **Manual:** [Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patients Understand](#) is a manual for clinicians from the American Medical Association.