

## Health Information Literacy

### Selected Resources

2014

#### Health and Literacy Information – General

- **LINCS (Literacy Information and Communication System)** – (<http://lincs.ed.gov>) This site, administered by the U.S. Department of Education is a “resource gathering, professional development, and national dissemination system serving the field of adult education,” providing access to high quality, evidence-based instructional materials and resources. Health literacy resources are available under the LINCS Resource Collection at (<http://lincs.ed.gov/professional-development/collection/search?tid%5B%5D=28&keys=&=Search.>)
- **Harvard School of Public Health, Health Literacy Studies** – (<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/>) A research center focused on communication and literacy skills as they relate to health outcomes. The Harvard Health Literacy Studies program is directed by Dr. Rima Rudd, a noted researcher and author in the field. The Web site contains a wealth of information on health and literacy in general (overviews), **assessment tools, research, materials creation, plain language glossaries** and other resources.
- **National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy** – (<http://www.health.gov/communication/HLActionPlan/>) The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released this plan in May 2010 with specific objectives for the various sectors (e.g., educators, healthcare providers and institutions, and government agencies) to improve the “jargon-filled language, dense writing, and complex explanations that often fill patient handouts, medical forms, health web sites, and recommendations to the public.” Includes case studies of best practices within and among the various sectors.
- **AHRQ Health Literacy and Cultural Competency** (<http://www.ahrq.gov/browse/hlitix.htm>) From the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), this “browse” page contains links to **health literacy measurement tools, research results**, and a few consumer-oriented materials (e.g., an audio podcast, “Understanding Your Health Information,” a **plain language “Going Home” discharge guide**, etc.). Of particular interest are the links to the Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit (see below) and the **Pharmacy Health Literacy Resources**.
- **North Carolina Program on Health Literacy** – (<http://nchealthliteracy.org/index.html>) A collaborative effort centered in UNC Chapel Hill the NC Program provides information and links to literacy assessments, slide presentations, and patient education materials.
  - **Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit** – (<http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/healthliteracytoolkit.pdf>) Produced in April 2010 by the NC Program on Health Literacy for the Agency for Healthcare Research and

Quality, this toolkit provides **specific, practical guidelines for organizations** to use in working to address health literacy barriers within their own institutions.

- **Florida Literacy Coalition Health Literacy Initiative –**  
([http://www.floridaliteracy.org/literacy\\_resources\\_teacher\\_tutor\\_health\\_literacy.html](http://www.floridaliteracy.org/literacy_resources_teacher_tutor_health_literacy.html)) A special initiative of the Florida Literacy Coalition is focused on health literacy. Through a collaborative effort with Florida Blue Cross Blue Shield, they're producing resources especially for ESL residents to help them navigate the U.S. health care system.
  - **Staying Healthy: An English Learner's Guide to Health Care and Staying Healthy**  
(<http://www.floridaliteracy.org/FLCHLP/files/SE%20Files/CompleteSEBook.pdf>)  
Written on a 4<sup>th</sup>- 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, this is **an excellent guide for newcomers to the U.S. healthcare system**. Also includes basic health and wellness and chronic disease management information, incorporating lots of illustrations.
- **Improving Health Literacy for Older Adults: Expert Panel Report –**  
(<http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/olderadults.pdf>) The CDC convened a panel of experts in December 2007 to address concerns specific to older adults and health literacy. This panel included such health literacy “stars” as Dr. Rima Rudd of the Harvard Health Literacy Studies center (see above) and Michelle Eberle from the New England Regional Medical Library. In addition to covering the barriers to health communication that confound elders in particular, the report of their discussion and recommendations also addresses potential areas of research and ways to address those barriers. Among those recommendations is one calling for creative collaborations among the broad range of entities concerned with the problem (e.g., researchers, healthcare providers, families, libraries, educators, etc.) to work together to apply the knowledge already available about improving health literacy in general and in older adults in particular.
- **National Center for Education Statistics –** (<http://nces.ed.gov/>) Federal government site dedicated to producing and reporting statistics related to education in the United States. Check here for updated data on literacy, including the recently produced reports on the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies or the PIAAC. (The “First Look” at this data is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014008.pdf>.)
- **World Health Communication Associates (WHCA) Action Guide on Health Literacy, Pt. 2, Evidence and Case Studies –**  
(<http://www.whcaonline.org/uploads/publications/WHCAhealthLiteracy-28.3.2010.pdf>) This guide, published in 2010, is intended as a practical roadmap to health literacy intervention planning especially focused on systems change (as opposed to individual change). It includes health literacy initiatives from all over the world as examples, reflecting the organization's international scope.

## Health and Literacy Information Resources for Purchase– Print/Audiovisual Media

- **Channing-Bete Company** – (<http://www.channing-bete.com/>) Channing-Bete produces numerous pamphlets, brochures, guidebook, DVDs and CDs on various health topics for adults and children. The adult materials are written mostly within a range of 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading levels, the “low literacy” materials produced at a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. Prices depend on quantity ordered.
- **ETR Associates** – (<http://www.etr.org/>) Includes a catalog of pamphlets, flip charts, computer games, posters and DVDs addressing numerous health topics, especially those concerning children, teens and young adults. Most print materials are targeted toward a 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level (both English and Spanish).
- **Healthy Roads Media** – (<http://www.healthyroadsmedia.org/index.htm>) A project providing health information materials in **multiple formats and various languages**, including not only English and Spanish but Hmong, Kurdish, Tagalog, Russian and others. Supported by the National Library of Medicine Division of Specialized Information Services.
- **Krames Patient Education** – (<http://www.kramesstaywell.com/Home>) Over 1500 patient education products in the Krames catalog, including print, DVD and online materials on a broad range of topics, written for a 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. Prices vary.
- **Institute for Healthcare Advancement** – (<http://www.ih4health.org>) A California based nonprofit organization dedicated to “empowering people to better health” through materials and services for people with low literacy skills. Along with their well-known “What to Do” book series (e.g., What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick, What to Do for Senior Health, What to Do for Healthy Teeth), all written for a 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, IHA also provides such services as a patient education materials review and revision service. Don’t miss the sample California **advance directive** for clients with low literacy skills, available free on the site in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese – an important contribution on a vital topic!

## Health Literacy Assessment Tools – Patient-Focused

- **Newest Vital Sign** – (<http://www.pfizerhealthliteracy.com/physicians-providers/NewestVitalSign.aspx>) Available free from Pfizer, this quick bilingual (English and Spanish) assessment tool can be administered in 3 minutes in a health provider’s office.
- **Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM)** – ([http://www.adultmeducation.com/AssessmentTools\\_1.html](http://www.adultmeducation.com/AssessmentTools_1.html)) A word recognition test to allow for quick identification of people at risk for low literacy skills.
- **Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT-4)** – Available for purchase from Wide Range Inc. (\$250), this test also measures literacy based on word recognition. Considered more precise than REALM, but potentially difficult to administer in a healthcare setting. (See Doak, Chapter 3, (<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/files/2012/09/doakchap1-4.pdf>))

- **Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults (TOFHLA) –** ([http://www.peppercornbooks.com/catalog/information.php?info\\_id=5](http://www.peppercornbooks.com/catalog/information.php?info_id=5)) Available for purchase from Peppercorn Books (\$70), this assessment tool is based on the Cloze method of short reading passages with blanks for the insertion of a word from a suggested list of choices. TOFHLA also measures numeracy skills by the use of health-related materials such as appointment slips and pill bottle instructions. Short form available, also Spanish language version as well as English.

### Health Literacy Assessment Tools – Material/Environment-Focused

- **Suitability Assessment of Materials (SAM) –** (<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/files/2012/09/doakchap1-4.pdf>) Useful in healthcare settings to gauge how well patient education materials communicate their intended message. Available in Doak, Chapter 4 (link above).
- **Health Literacy Advisor (HLA) –** (<http://www.healthliteracyinnovations.com/home>) Online health communication assessment and revision tool, marketed to healthcare institutions. Available for licensing on a yearly basis.
- **Health Literacy Environment of Hospitals and Health Centers –** (<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/files/2012/09/healthliteracyenvironment.pdf>) This guide from Dr. Rima Rudd (Harvard School of Public Health) includes ratings checklists for navigational signs and maps, print materials and staff. Extremely useful for outside or self-assessment of any healthcare facility.
- **Pharmacy Health Literacy Assessment Tool –** (<http://www.ahrq.gov/legacy/qual/pharmlit/pharmlit.pdf>) An AHRQ guide for pharmacies to assess their communication practices using a combination of outside auditors, staff assessment and patient focus groups. (A link to the AHRQ guide, “How to Create a Pill Card” for **easy to follow medication instructions** can be found at (<http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/pillcard/pillcard.htm>.)

### Health Literacy Guidelines, Glossaries, Miscellaneous Tools

- **Federal Plain Language Guidelines –** (<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/guidelines/bigdoc/fullbigdoc.pdf>) Guidelines for communicating in “plain language” for federal government. Includes sections on identifying the audience, organizing and writing documents using guidelines, and testing the document prior to dissemination.
- **Health Literacy Online Guidelines –** (<http://www.health.gov/healthliteracyonline/>) Guidelines from the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) for creating easy to understand health information web content.
- **Principles of Readability –** (<http://www.impact-information.com/impactinfo/readability02.pdf>) Includes details about various readability formulas.

- **Plain Language Thesaurus for Health Communications –**  
([http://www.plainlanguage.gov/populartopics/health\\_literacy/Thesaurus\\_V-10.doc](http://www.plainlanguage.gov/populartopics/health_literacy/Thesaurus_V-10.doc))  
National Center for Health Marketing’s glossary of plain language substitutions for healthcare terminology.
- **Simply Put: A Guide for Creating Easy-to-Understand Materials –**  
([http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/Simply\\_Put.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/Simply_Put.pdf)). Centers for Disease Control practical guide to creating easy-to-understand materials, both print and online. Includes instruction in design features such as organization of information and graphics which can enhance understanding beyond plain language.
- **AMA Health Literacy Kit –** (<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/ama-foundation/our-programs/public-health/health-literacy-program/health-literacy-kit.page>)  
Targeting physicians as its audience, the updated toolkit for health literacy includes the DVDs, “Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patients Understand” and “Low Health Literacy: You Can’t Tell by Looking.” (Both videos are also available online, linked on this site.) The kit also includes a manual for clinicians.
- **Effective Communication Tools for Healthcare Professionals Free Online Course –**  
(<http://www.hrsa.gov/publichealth/healthliteracy/>). Free course provided by HRSA to improve provider/patient communications.
- **Medical Library Association (MLA) Health Information Literacy Resources –**  
(<https://www.mlanet.org/resources/healthlit/index.html>). Includes health information literacy **tutorials**, “Prescription for Information” (for healthcare providers) and “Prescription: Information!” (for librarians), developed by Gail Kouame at the Northwest Regional Medical Library. The **MLA Health Information Literacy Curriculum** also available here.
- **CDC Health Literacy for Public Health Professionals Online Course –**  
(<http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/GetTrainingCE.html>) Training program on health literacy issues and practical measures specifically for public health professionals. Continuing education credits available.
- **HHS Quick Guide to Health Literacy and Older Adults –**  
(<http://www.health.gov/communication/literacy/olderadults/literacy.htm>) Guide for professionals working with older adults. Includes tips for communication health information considering such issues as visual or cognitive impairments.
- **What Did My Doctor Say? –** (<https://www.mlanet.org/for-health-consumers/medspeak>).  
Web site database offering clear explanations of medical terms in plain language, by the Medical Library Association.
- **Information Rx –** (<http://informationrx.org/>). **Information “prescription” pads** produced by the National Library of Medicine (NLM), for prescribing MedlinePlus and other reliable NLM sites to patients for more information about health issues.

## Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Health Communication/Education Resources

- **Hablamos Juntos** – (<http://www.hablamosjuntos.org>) This organization is dedicated to developing affordable interpretation services for healthcare institutions, especially those serving large Hispanic populations. The site includes a wealth of information on the use of **universal symbols in healthcare** at <http://www.hablamosjuntos.org/signage/default.index.asp>.
- **EthnoMed** – (<http://ethnomed.org/>). Cross-cultural communication in healthcare, including **communication aids** for providers (<http://ethnomed.org/patient-education/communication/communication>) and **easy to read materials** in multiple languages on various health topics.
- **Migrant Health Promotion** – (<http://www.migranthealth.org/>). Site includes downloadable health promotion materials, evaluated for literacy level and cultural competency, especially for health educators (promotoras) in Latino farmworker communities.
- **DiversityRx** – (<http://www.diversityrx.org/>) An information clearinghouse on language and cultural needs of minorities, immigrants and other diverse groups seeking health care.
- **Health Information Translations** – (<http://www.healthinfotranslations.com/>). A collaborative health education project for LEP patients. Health information materials (and some audio podcasts) using plain language available in multiple languages, including American Sign Language.

## Organizations and Funding Agencies

- **AHRQ** – *see above*
- **National Library of Medicine (NLM)** – (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/ep/healthlit.html>). The National Library of Medicine has offered its “Understanding and Promoting Health Literacy” exploratory/developmental (R21) and research (R01) grants for the past few years, in support of the Healthy People priorities regarding this issue.
- **Pfizer Clear Health Communication Initiative** – ([http://www.pfizer.com/health/literacy/healthcare\\_professionals/public\\_policy\\_researchers/opportunities\\_for\\_funding\\_and\\_collaboration](http://www.pfizer.com/health/literacy/healthcare_professionals/public_policy_researchers/opportunities_for_funding_and_collaboration)). This Pfizer company foundation supports community-based interventions, research projects, conferences, and other activities to increase awareness of the problem as well as creative ways to address it. Provides the “Newest Vital Sign” assessment tool, communication checklists for providers, and other tools on the site. Pfizer provides operating support to the “**Ask Me 3**” initiative (<http://www.npsf.org/askme3/>)
- **Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy** – (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/index.html>) An office of the U.S. Department of Education, the DAEL promotes adult basic skills education programs and provides **funds to states for adult education and literacy programs**. (The states then

distribute these funds to eligible community-based organizations and other entities to provide the programming.)

### **Other Web Sites**

- **MedlinePlus** – (<http://www.medlineplus.gov>). Besides offering health information **videos and interactive tutorials** for consumers, this service of the National Library of Medicine also offers links to identifiable “**easy to read**” **information** (accumulated at [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/all\\_easytoread.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/all_easytoread.html)) as well as information in **multiple languages**.
- **NIH SeniorHealth** – (<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/index.html>). Produced by the National Institute on Aging, this easy to use web site, featuring large text and other features to make it easier for elders to view, also provides quality-filtered health information on various topics. Site includes videos, an easy-to-implement text reader, and a “**Trainer’s Toolkit**” for **teaching older adults how to search online for health information**.
- **PubMed Health** – (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/>). Provides summary reviews of clinical effectiveness of treatments and prevention measures written for consumers and healthcare providers. The “Behind the Headlines” reviews provide important information for consumers about “the science behind health stories in the news.”