English for Health: 
Developing and Promoting 
Health Literacy Partnerships

Beth Gaytan
Health Literacy Director
Beth@litnetwork.org

www.litnetwork.org
In this presentation, you will learn:

• About the English for Health program
• Goals of the program
• Outcomes of the program
• How we developed partnerships to bridge the gap between patients and providers
• What we learned about health literacy partnerships
What is the strongest predictor of individual health status?

A) age  
B) income  
C) education level  
D) employment status  
E) racial or ethnic group  
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Literacy Levels and Health Outcomes

- Low literacy is associated with poverty and lack of access to health care.

- "Non-compliant" patients who do not follow discharge instructions often lack the literacy skills to do so.
English for Health

- English language course focused on improving health outcomes for adult English language learners in our community
- 12 weeks, 48 hours
- Learning opportunities for those that access the healthcare system and for those that work within it
Key Components

- Pre and Post assessments (English language and health)
- Partnering healthcare organization hosts class
- Free text *(Staying Health)* and journal
- Free childcare
- Frequent provider involvement
- Authentic curriculum
Our Learners

• Most have had little interaction with health care system
• Income and level of education vary greatly
• Most do not use health care
Program Goals

• Teach basic English skills to connect with the health care system
• Give a basic understanding of the healthcare system and a patient’s role within it
• Teach learners how to find and access affordable health care
• Encourage learners to ask questions about their health and health care
• Increase learner confidence for more effective communication with healthcare providers
Curriculum

- *Staying Healthy*, Chapters 1-3
- Authentic materials
- Real use of new language and health literacy skills
- Students learn how to teach others
- Students interact with healthcare staff and providers
  - Presentations
  - Medical students—community involvement rotations
  - Mock clinic
Mock Clinic

Learners communicate with clinic staff, make appointments, fill out basic forms, describe health symptoms and discuss medications with a pharmacist
Mock Clinic

Learners practice in an authentic setting with local healthcare professionals. They must use language in problem solving, communication, and self-advocacy.
Reported Program Objectives

• Learners will demonstrate improved verbal and written skills to facilitate better advocacy and proficiency in navigating the complex health care systems

• Learners will participate in classroom discussions and mock health clinic and successfully complete at least 70% of the program’s 15 predetermined competencies
Anecdotal Outcomes

• **Myriam** cut her cholesterol in half by eating better

• **Manuela** made her own doctor's appointment and asked a pharmacist questions about a cold medicine

• **Juan Carlos** found out how to access low-cost health insurance at Community health center after being laid-off and losing his job
Advancing Health Literacy while Creating Healthy Partnerships

• *English for Health*
  
  • First semester - 2008
    
    • Offered in a community center
    
    • RNs from St Mary’s Hospital volunteered in a mock clinic
Partnership Steps: 2009

• Latino Health Council endorses program
• St Mary’s Hospital hosts class, provides financial and in-kind support
• UW School of Pharmacy students assist with development of curriculum
• Willy Street Co-Op offers a tour, lesson on nutrition and $20 gift cards to all students
2010 Recognition

Wisconsin Literacy: Outstanding Health Literacy Achievement.
2010 Recognition

• Wisconsin Department of Health Services: Promising Practice for improving minority health outcomes (one of five statewide).

Partnership Steps: 2011

- **Humana** grant funds program expansion in 2011
- **Group Health Cooperative, Wingra Community Health Center** and **Dean Health** support program, host classes
- **UW School of Medicine** students as classroom tutors
- **United Way** Safe and Healthy Aging: improve toolkit with usability testing
- **UW School of Medicine**: ESL Students are paid consultants
Partnership Steps: 2012

• Group Health Cooperative supports the development of *English for Health 2*
  • *Staying Healthy*, Chapters 4-6

• UW West Clinic begins to host *English for Health*

• Contract work with local HMO to improve the readability of documents

• Development of *English for Healthy Kids*

• Further funding from **Humana** to offer trainings to other community based organizations
Creating Partnerships

• Offer a service or a program
• Community endorsement
• Existing connections
• Meet with everyone
• Advertise your work
• Use media to give publicity to partners
Why English for Health

• Providers and staff become personally engaged

• Hospitals and clinics show community involvement

• The program can be offered initially with in-kind support

• The program is sustainable

• The program benefits community members
What makes a Healthy Partnership?

- It starts at the top: leadership support
- Acknowledgment that all partners benefit
- Good advanced planning
- Emphasis on common goals
- Joint leadership on issues
- Visibility in the community
Contact info:

Beth Gaytan  
Health Literacy Director  
Beth@litnetwork.org  
608-244-3911  
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