



**Applying a Health Literacy Lens
to Learning Materials**
Erika Heiges, MPH, CHES

Session Objectives

1. Attendees will learn about the core principles of health literacy and ways to apply the principles when selecting (or developing) materials for literacy education.
2. Attendees will learn about *A Guide to Reviewing Materials for Reliability and Health Literacy* and ways to use it when selecting (or developing) materials for literacy education.

Agenda

- **Introduction**
- **Health Literacy**
 - Definition
 - Impact
 - Principles
- **Health Literacy and Adult Literacy**
 - Health literacy and adult education
 - Involving learners: Ask Me 3
 - Selecting materials for use
- **Evaluating Materials Exercise**

Background

Education Solutions That Drive Behavior Change



**STRATEGIC CONSULTING
CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND
PRODUCTION
RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS
PRODUCTS AND PLATFORMS
MEASUREMENT/ANALYTICS**



Social Community
for Healthcare Extenders
(Professional)

www.surroundhealth.net



Education Platform for
Professional-Patient Engagement

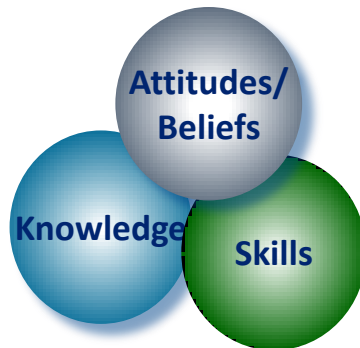
www.healthedondemand.com

About SurroundHealth



Our Frameworks

Employ Behavior Change, Adult Learning, and Health Literacy Principles



We employ **Behavior Change Models** to inform programs that can improve knowledge and skills and change behavior



Clear By Design™ principles ensure communications align with best practices in health literacy



Erika Heiges, MPH, CHES

Director, Health Education

- Responsible for helping support project teams in development of both print-based and web-based patient and healthcare professional programs
- Ensure that programs adhere to health literacy principles and incorporate principles of adult learning and behavior change theories
- BS in Health Sciences, concentration in Wellness and Health Promotion from the State University of New York College at Cortland
- Masters in Public Health (MPH), concentration in Community Health Education from San Jose State University
- Certified Health Education Specialist
- Volunteer adult tutor for Literacy Volunteers of Monmouth County

Health Literacy

Health Literacy: Defined

Health literacy is defined as ***“the ability to find, understand, and use basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.”***

Within healthcare, patients require health literacy skills to:

- Find health information¹
- Interact with healthcare providers (HCPs)^{1,2}

They also need the skills to:

- Self-manage a health condition¹
- Navigate the healthcare system¹

1. Nielsen-Bohlman L, Panzer AM, Kindig DA, eds. Health literacy: a prescription to end confusion. <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10883.html>. Accessed May 4, 2012.

2. Amalraj S, Starkweather C, Nguyen C, Naeim A. Health literacy, communication, and treatment decision-making in older cancer patients. *Oncology*. 2009;23(4):369-375.

Health Literacy: Considerations

Health literacy considers a person's knowledge and skills:

- Reading
- Writing, listening, speaking, arithmetic
- Visual
- Conceptual

Adult learners with low literacy may:

- Take words or instructions literally
- Read slowly and miss meanings
- Skip over hard or uncommon words
- Get lost in details
- Have difficulty finding focus
- Tire quickly

Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc. What is health literacy? Available at http://www.chcs.org/publications3960/publications_show.htm?doc_id213119
Accessed May 4, 2012.

Doak CC, Doak LG, Root JH. *Teaching Patients with Low Literacy Skills*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia, Pa: JB Lippincott Company; 1995.

Doak LG, Doak CC, eds. *Pfizer Principles for Clear Health Communication*. 2nd ed. Available at http://www.pfizerhealthliteracy.com/pdfs/The_Health_Literacy_Problem_v2.pdf.
Accessed May 4, 2012.

Impact of Health Literacy

Take 2 tablets twice daily



All patients	Low literacy skills	Adequate literacy skills
395 primary care patients in study	Only 35% <u>could show</u> the correct number of pills to take	80% got it right. 20% <u>could not show</u> the correct number of pills to take

Davis TC, Parker R. To err really is human: misunderstanding medication labels. http://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/ac/06/slides/2006-4230s1_01_02_Davis%20and%20Parker.pdf. Accessed May 4, 2012.

Why Health Literacy Matters

The cost of limited health literacy to the nation's economy is estimated to be between

\$106 billion and **\$236 billion** per year



90 million Americans are at risk for not acting on health information because of low health literacy, regardless of age, income, race, or background



1. Vernon J et al. 2007. Low health literacy: implications for national policy. <http://www.npsf.org/pr/pressrel/2007-10-11.php>.

2. Weiss BD. *Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patients Understand*. 2nd ed. American Medical Association; 2007.

Why Health Literacy Matters

AMA has identified health literacy as the strongest predictor of health status—stronger than income, education, employment status, or racial or ethnic group^{1,2}

Low health literacy has been associated with:

- Higher rates of medication errors²
- Less knowledge of health prevention, diseases, and self-care strategies^{1,2}
- More hospitalizations^{1,2}
- More frequent use of emergency rooms²
- Higher levels of illness^{1,2}



1. Nielsen-Bohlman L, Panzer AM, Kindig DA, eds. Health literacy: a prescription to end confusion. <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10883.html>. Accessed May 4, 2012.
2. Weiss BD. *Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patients Understand. Manual for Clinicians*. 2nd ed. <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/367/healthlitclinicians.pdf>. Accessed May 4, 2012.

Health Literacy Principles: It's More Than Just Reading Level

Consider selecting materials to use with learners that follow Clear By Design™ health literacy principles:

- 1. Provide content that solves problems**
- 2. Write for easy reading**
- 3. Involve the reader**
- 4. Design for easy reading**
- 5. Use color with purpose**
- 6. Use visuals for emphasis**

1. Provide content that solves problems

- Is the purpose of the material clearly stated?
- Does the material focus on behaviors? (“how to” rather than simply “facts”)
- Is the number of concepts in the piece limited to what reasonably can be learned?

2. Write for easy reading

- Does the copy use familiar words and define new terms?
- Is the reading level appropriate? (Fry, SMOG, Flesch-Kincaid)
- Is information “chunked” and are subheaders or other devices employed to prepare readers for upcoming information?

3. Involve the reader

- Is the copy written in a positive and friendly tone?
- Is the material interactive and does it allow for reader involvement? (checklists, Q&A, etc)

4. Design for easy reading

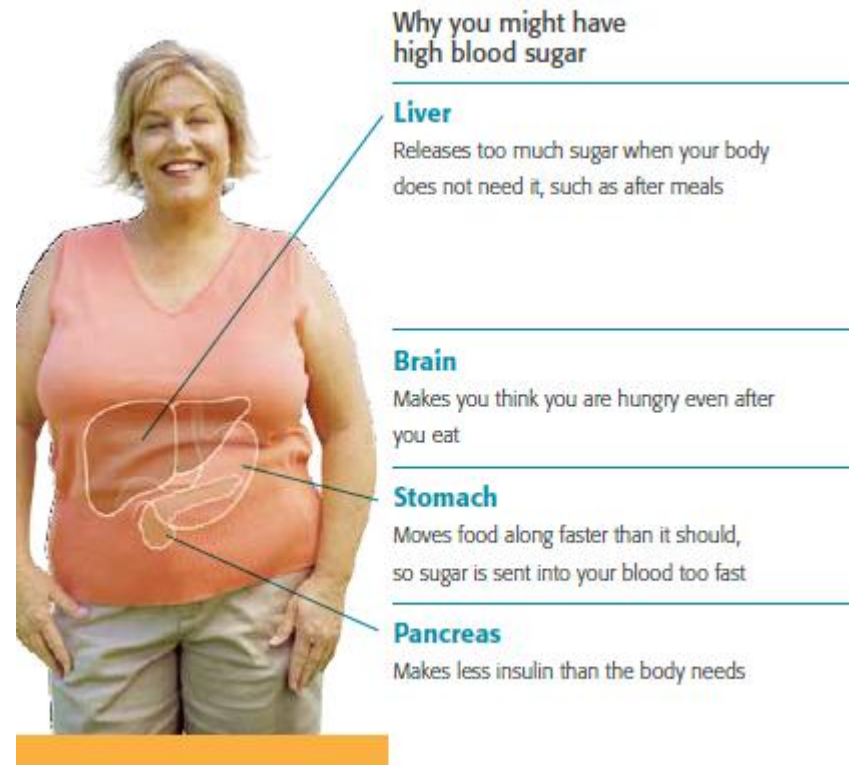
- Is there adequate white space to reduce the appearance of clutter?
- Is there little to no use of italics and running capitals?
- Is the type size adequate, such as 12-point font or larger?

5. Use color with purpose

- Is there appropriate contrast between background and text? (dark text on light background)
- Does the color and graphic elements highlight key messages?

6. Use visuals for emphasis

- Are graphics and illustrations used to enhance understanding? (illustrations serve to demonstrate a desired behavior)
- Are tables, charts and diagrams clearly labeled and explained?



Health Literacy and Adult Literacy

Health Literacy and Adult Education: Supports Self-Efficacy

- Adult education promotes:
 - Skills for basic literacy
 - Course material that is relevant to learners' lives and helps them solve problems
- Health literacy promotes:
 - Understanding and use of health information



Reliability

How do you define reliability?

re·li·a·bil·i·ty [ruh-laie-uh-bill-uh-tee]

noun

the ability to be relied on or depended on, as for accuracy, honesty, or achievement.

Why is reliability important for reading materials?

- To ensure the source of information is accurate, dependable, and useful to learners



Involving Learners: Ask Me 3

- Encourage learners to be actively engaged in their healthcare
- Ask Me 3™ is an education program designed to promote communication between healthcare providers and patients
- Prompts 3 questions for patients to understand the answers to:

- 1. What is my main problem?**
- 2. What do I need to do?**
- 3. Why is it important for me to do this?**

Selecting Materials: Evaluating Reliability and Health Literacy

A Guide to Reviewing Materials for Reliability and Health Literacy can help guide your materials selection process

Part 1: Assess for Reliability

Check	Assessment question	What to consider
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Are the objectives clear?	Look for an explicit list of objectives to read. • What is meant to read? • What is the purpose of the information? Is it intended to inform, persuade, or entertain? • Consider whether the material and questions readers may ask.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Does it achieve its objective?	Check whether the main message is supported by the content used. • Look for a range of thinking skills for reading and/or writing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Is it relevant?	Consider whether the material and questions readers may ask.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Is it clear what sources of information were used to compile the publication? (Specify findings sources)	Check whether the main message is supported by the content used. • Look for a range of thinking skills for reading and/or writing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Is it balanced or unbiased?	Check whether the material is written from a balanced or a range of sources of information. • Look for clear indication of whether the author is a professional or a range of sources of information.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Does it provide details of additional sources of support and information?	Look for references to further sources of information or other organizations of interest.

Part 2: Assess for Health Literacy

Check	Assessment question	What to consider
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Does the material provide content that solves problems?	• Is the purpose of the content clearly stated? • Does the material focus on behavior? How is it clear that change is needed? • Is the content of activities in the guide limited to what readers can do for themselves? • Are there other alternatives to the proposed solution?
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Is the material written for easy reading?	• Does the copy use familiar words and define the terms? • Are the words that are unfamiliar for most students? (Flesch, SMOG, SMOG-Gramm) • Is the material "readable"? • Are there subheads or other devices to organize material to improve readability?
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Does the material involve the reader?	• Is the copy written in a positive and friendly tone? • Is the material interactive and allow for reader involvement? (Examples, Q&A, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Is the material designed for easy reading?	• Does the material include text to reduce the amount of reading? • Does the material use color and coding to help? • Is the type size adequate, such as 12 point font or larger?
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Is color used with purpose?	• Does the material include text to describe the color and/or text that has large background? • Does the color and graphic elements highlight the message?
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Does the material use visuals for emphasis?	• Are graphics and illustrations used to enhance understanding? (Examples, scenarios to demonstrate a concept or behavior) • Are tables, charts and diagrams clearly labeled and explained?

- Based on the DISCERN instrument and Clear By Design™ health literacy principles
- DISCERN instrument is a validated tool created to judge the quality of written consumer health information on treatment choice—originally created for consumer use
- Clear By Design™ is a health literacy evaluation program based on 22 core principles of health literacy

A Guide to Reviewing Materials for Reliability and Health Literacy

Part 1: Assess for Reliability

1. Are the objectives clear?

- Look for an indication of:
 - What it's about
 - What it's meant to cover
 - Who may find it useful

2. Does it achieve its objectives?

- Consider whether the material provides the information it aimed to as outlined in question 1

3. Is it relevant?

- Consider whether the material addresses the questions readers may ask

4. Is it clear what sources of information were used to compile the publication?

- Check whether the main claims or statements made are accompanied by a reference to the sources used
- Look for a means of checking the sources used, such as a bibliography/reference list

A Guide to Reviewing Materials for Reliability and Health Literacy continued

5. It is balanced or unbiased?

- Look for:
 - Clear indication of whether the material is written from a personal or objective view
 - A range of sources of information were used

6. Does it provide details of additional sources of support and information?

- Look for suggestions for further reading or details of other organizations of support

A Guide to Reviewing Materials for Reliability and Health Literacy continued

Part 2: Assess for Health Literacy

- 1. Does the material provide content that solves problems?**
 - Is the purpose of the material clearly stated?
 - Does the material focus on behaviors? (“how to” rather than simply “facts”)
 - Is the number of concepts in the piece limited to what reasonably can be learned?

- 2. Is the material written for easy reading?**
 - Does the copy use familiar words and defines new terms?
 - Is the reading level appropriate for your students? (Fry, SMOG, Flesch-Kincaid)
 - Is information “chunked”?
 - Are there subheads or other devices to prepare readers for upcoming information?

- 3. Does the material involve the reader?**
 - Is the copy written in a positive and friendly tone?
 - Is the material interactive and does it allow for reader involvement? (checklists, Q&A, etc)

A Guide to Reviewing Materials for Reliability and Health Literacy continued

4. Is the material designed for easy reading?

- Is there adequate white space to reduce the appearance of clutter?
- Is there little to no use of italics and running capitals?
- Is the type size adequate, such as 12-point font or larger?

5. Is color used with purpose?

- Is there appropriate contrast between background and text? (dark text on light background)
- Does the color and graphic elements highlight key messages?

6. Does the material use visuals for emphasis?

- Are graphics and illustrations used to enhance understanding? (illustrations serve to demonstrate a desired behavior)
- Are tables, charts and diagrams clearly labeled and explained?

Selection of Materials: What You Can Do

- **Evaluate** materials using the *A Guide to Reviewing Materials for Reliability and Health Literacy*
- **Share** *A Guide to Reviewing Materials for Reliability and Health Literacy* with colleagues and peers
- **Share** with HealthEd how you've used the guide in practice!

Resources

Health Literacy

- National Institutes of Health: Clear Communication: An NIH Health Literacy Initiative <http://www.nih.gov/clearcommunication/>
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/literacy/>
- HealthEd's Health Literacy Quiz <http://healthed.com/news-and-views/health-literacy.aspx>
- AskMe3™ <http://www.npsf.org/for-healthcare-professionals/programs/ask-me-3/>

DISCERN Instrument http://www.discern.org.uk/discern_instrument.php

Sources of Health Information for Adult Learners

- MedlinePlus (U.S. National Library of Medicine) <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) <http://www.ahrq.gov/>
- Healthy Roads Media <http://www.healthyroadsmedia.org/>