HEALTH LITERACY:
Why It’s Important to Patient Care &
What You Can Do to Help
Learning Objectives

At the end of the presentation you will be able to:

■ Define the meaning of health literacy
■ Recognize the impact of low health literacy on patient care
■ List strategies to improve health literacy in your organization
■ Identify sources where you can find additional health literacy and health information resources
Health Literacy: Why It’s Important
What is Health Literacy?

“The degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, communicate, process, and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions.”

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, Title V
What is Health Literacy?

Health literacy also refers to the capacity of professionals and institutions to communicate effectively so that community members can make informed decisions and take appropriate actions to protect and promote their health.

New York City Mayor's office
Health Literacy: An Interaction

**Patient’s Skills:**
“The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, communicate, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions”
(ACA 2010)

**Our Expectations and System Demands:**
Managing medications, remembering and following spoken and written directions, interpretation

Health Literacy
Health Literacy is...
36% of U.S. adults have basic/below basic health literacy.
Cost of Low Health Literacy

- Use fewer preventive care services
- Have poorer health outcomes
- Have more hospitalizations and ER visits
- Make more errors when taking medication
- Higher mortality rates
Cost of Low Health Literacy

Low health literacy costs the U.S. approximately $106 billion to $236 billion annually.

- Increase in use of services to treat complications of disease
- Higher rates of hospitalization and use of emergency rooms

Realities of Health Care Today...

- Patients are now asked to make decisions about their own disease process.

- Most patients are not equipped to make these kinds of decisions.
5 Strategies for Improving Health Literacy
1. Use Universal Precautions

Assume everyone will not understand at least part of the information they are given.
1. Use Universal Precautions

- Create a safe and shame-free environment
- Structure services and patient interactions to minimize risk
- Empower patients to make informed decisions
2. Use Clear Verbal Communication

No, that's not the type of stool sample I had in mind.
2. Use Clear Verbal Communication

- Avoid medical jargon
- Use commonly understood words
- Limit information: focus on 1-3 “need-to-know” items
- Include visual aids: 3-D models, pictures, videos
- Slow down
2. Use Clear Verbal Communication

Invite Questions

- “What questions do you have?” or “Let me answer any questions you may have.”
- AHRQ Questions to Ask Your Doctor
- NPSF Ask Me 3

Assess understanding

- Use “Teach Back” Technique
- Ask patients to repeat in their own words what they need to know or do
- Teach Back Training Toolkit www.teachbacktraining.org
3. Use clear written communication

- Focus on 2-3 important points
- Aim for 5th to 6th grade reading level
- Avoid medical jargon
- Use short words and sentences
- Use the active voice
- Leave white space
- Careful with images and pictures
- Feedback from target audience
3. Use clear written communication

How To Write Easy-To-Read Health Materials

*National Library of Medicine*

Patient Education Materials Assessment Tool (PEMAT)

*AHRQ*
4. Promote Reliable Resources

URL for MedlinePlus
4. Promote Reliable Resources

- Over 900 topic pages
- Easy-to-Read materials
- Multiple languages
- Medical Dictionary
- Interactive tutorials, videos, quizzes
4. Promote Reliable Resources:

URL for MedlinePlus Connect
4. Promote Reliable Resources

[Image of MedlinePlus.gov]

URL for InformationRx
4. Promote Reliable Resources: Partner with a Librarian

When you write an InfoRx, a librarian can “fill it” in a number of ways:

■ By preparing an information packet for patients to take home.

■ By demonstrating how to access information either in the library or online.

■ By referring patients to community support services, if needed.
4. Promote Reliable Resources: Partner with a Librarian

URL for McGoogan Library CHIRS
4. Promote Reliable Resources: Partner with a Librarian

- If your organization does not have a library, there is a directory of medical libraries available through the National Network of Libraries of Medicine.

- The National Center for Education Statistics has a national directory of public libraries.

URL for NN/LM Directory
URL for NCES Directory
5. Assess Your Practice/Organization

URL for Discussion Paper
5. Assess Your Practice/Organization

Building Health Literate Organizations

UnityPoint Health

https://www.unitypoint.org/health-literacy-guidebook.aspx
5. Assess Your Practice/Organization

Health Literacy
Precautions Toolkit

AHRQ

More Resources
Resources

- Centers for Disease Control: Health Literacy
  http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/

- Health Resources and Services Administration
  http://www.hrsa.gov/publichealth/healthliteracy/

- Cancer Patient Education Network Health Literacy Toolkit
  http://www.cancerpatienteducation.org/health-literacy.shtml

- Health Literacy Nebraska
  http://www.healthliteracyne.org/

- Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors
  http://nalhd.org/
Resources

Pre-Formulated PubMed Search Strategies for Health Literacy

- PubMed Health Literacy Search Query

- Healthy People 2020 Structured Evidence Queries
  https://phpartners.org/hp2020/index.html
National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM)

**Mission:** Provide health professionals and the general public with equal access to health information

- Nation-wide program coordinated by the National Library of Medicine
- 8 Regional Offices
- Trainings, conference exhibits, promotional materials

[URL for NN/LM]
Bringing Health Information to the Community (BHIC)

This blog focuses on health information issues related to the community, especially underserved communities.

National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

Wednesday, March 5th, 2014

On March 10, National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is observed as a way to encourage sharing knowledge and taking action. Ways to get involved include learning about the Affordable Care Act, locating testing services, and promoting the webinar on March 10, "Ongoing Care and Treatment: Women with HIV/AIDS." See AIDS.gov for more information: http://1.usa.gov/P1OhQH

Posted in Children and Teens, HIV/AIDS | No Comments »

February 7th is National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

Friday, February 7th, 2014

February 7th is National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, an opportunity to promote HIV prevention, testing, care, and treatment among African Americans in the United States. African Americans are disproportionately affected by HIV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that blacks accounted for nearly half (44 percent) of all new infections in 2010, despite making up only 14 percent of the population. This represents a rate that is eight times higher than whites. Overall, African American gay and bisexual men, especially young men, are the hardest-hit. In addition, African American women are far more affected by HIV than women of any other race or ethnicity.

Resources for more information about diagnosis, treatment and prevention include
AIDSInfo’s African American HIV/AIDS Health Topics: http://1.usa.gov/1g2aiHr
CDC’s HIV Among African Americans: http://1.usa.gov/1kkGx8M

Posted in HIV/AIDS, Minority Health Concerns, Public Health | No Comments »


Wednesday, December 18th, 2013

1 in 3 LGBT individuals in the US doesn’t have health insurance, which means LGBT people are likely to be sicker, wait to get tested or treated for most illnesses and suffer more serious complications when they do get sick. In the past it’s been hard to find coverage that treats LGBT families fairly, covers the care they need and doesn’t break the bank. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) can increase coverage in our community by making health insurance more affordable, standardizing basic care and eliminating the exclusions that hurt the LGBT community the most.

But where should LGBT people start? How do they evaluate plans? What kind of coverage do they need? How do rules about family coverage apply to LGBT families? See “Where to Start, What to Ask: A Guide for LGBT People Choosing Healthcare Plans”, from Strong Families: http://bit.ly/13hFlAQ. This guide provides a template for the questions one should ask Navigators, certified application counselors or insurance brokers to get answers about cost and coverage, reproductive healthcare, transgender healthcare, finding insurance if you are HIV+ or living with AIDS, covering LGBT youth and many other LGBT health needs.

Posted in Children and Teens, HIV/AIDS, Minority Health Concerns | No Comments »
Thank You!

Christian Minter, MLIS

Nebraska/Education Coordinator
National Network of Libraries of Medicine,
MidContinental Region

christian.minter@unmc.edu
1-800-338-7657
402-559-7226

http://nnlm.gov/mcr

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