Health Literacy 101

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Kansas Public Health Association
Annual Conference 2012
Topeka, Kansas
October 2, 2012
What We Will Cover…

1. An introduction to Health Literacy

2. Techniques to improve communication with low-literacy patients

3. Parent Health Literacy Project
   ...currently underway in Kansas

4. Health Literacy Kansas
   ...its evolution, composition & mission
What is Health Literacy?

Health literacy is defined as

"the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, communicate, process and understand the basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions."

-- The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 2010
What is Health Literacy?

Basically, health literacy is the ability to make good health decisions every day.
Why does Health Literacy matter?
Do I look like an idiot?
How widespread is low health literacy?

- Nearly 9 out of 10 adults have difficulty using the everyday health information that is routinely available in our healthcare facilities, retail outlets, media and communities.

- Only 12% of adults in America are considered to be fully proficient in health literacy.

Source: National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003
Risks of Low Health Literacy

There is a direct link between the level of health literacy and health disparities.

National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003
Without clear information and understanding...

...people are more likely to

- skip necessary medical tests
- end up in the emergency room more often
- have a harder time managing chronic diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure

Risks of Low Health Literacy

People with limited health literacy skills have:

- Higher use of treatment services
  - Hospitalization
  - Emergency services
- More medication and treatment errors
- Lower use of preventive services
- Lower chance of following through with prescribed treatment plans
“If patients cannot comprehend needed health information, attempts to improve the quality of care and reduce health care costs and disparities may fail.”

(Institute of Medicine, 2004)

AMA Health Literacy Video

The strongest predictor of HEALTH is LITERACY SKILLS

National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003
Health Literacy Components

- Reading and writing
- Listening and verbal communication (patient and provider)
- Numeracy
  - Computation skills
  - Interpreting / evaluating risk (%)
- Self-efficacy
- Culture / belief systems

Health Literacy in America: Results from the NAAL

100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0%

Proicient: Define medical term from complex document, Calculate share of employee’s health insurance costs

Intermediate: Determine healthy weight from BMI chart, Interpret prescription and over-the-counter drug labels

Basic: Understand simple patient education handout

Below Basic: Circle date on appointment slip, Understand simple pamphlet about pre-test instructions

Kutner et al 2006
Literacy Levels

36% of American adults have Basic or Below Basic health literacy skills...

- 90 million people in the United States
- Over 1.5 million people in Missouri
- Over 750,000 people in Kansas

National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003
Institute of Medicine: Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion, 2004
Low Health Literacy

Persons with low health literacy lack the skills and confidence to choose the most appropriate type of care, resulting in over-utilization of emergency rooms and unnecessary health care costs.
Cost of Poor Health Literacy…

- $73 billion in unnecessary costs annually  
  *(Friedland, Georgetown University, 2003)*

- $106-$238 billion in unnecessary costs annually  
  *(Vernon, J.A., University of Connecticut, 2007)*
Benefits of Improved Health Literacy

- Better health outcomes
- More efficient use of health resources
- Reduced costs
What needs to be done to improve health literacy?

- Design & present health information and services that people can use effectively.
- Build our own health literacy skills and help others—community members, health professionals, and anyone else who communicates about health—build their skills, too.
- Every organization involved in health information and services needs its own health literacy plan to improve its organizational practices.
- Learn about health literacy issues, develop skills, create an action plan, and apply what you learn to create health information and services that make a positive difference in people’s lives.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/
Health Literacy Reports

*Healthy People 2020: Improving the Health of Americans*

  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Dec. 2010)

*Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence and Patient-and Family-Centered Care: A Roadmap for Hospitals*

  Joint Commission for Accreditation of Hospitals (2010)

*The National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy*

  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (May 2010)
Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care

A Roadmap for Hospitals

http://www.jointcommission.org/Advancing_Effective_Communication/
National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

http://www.health.gov/communication/HLActionPlan/
National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

GOAL

1. Develop and disseminate health and safety information that is accurate, accessible, and actionable

2. Promote changes in the health care system that improve health information, communication, informed decision-making, and access to health services

3. Incorporate accurate, standards-based, and developmentally appropriate health and science information and curricula in child care and education through the university level

4. Support and expand local efforts to provide adult education, English language instruction, and culturally and linguistically appropriate health information services in the community

5. Build partnerships, develop guidance, and change policies

6. Increase basic research and the development, implementation, and evaluation of practices and interventions to improve health literacy

7. Increase the dissemination and use of evidence-based health literacy practices and interventions
George Bernard Shaw…

“The problem with communication is the illusion that it has occurred.”
Plain Language Act

President O’Bama signed the Plain Writing Act of 2010 requiring agencies to write in plain language.

“Plain language is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it.”

www.plainlanguage.gov
Written material is in plain language if your audience can:

- find what they need;
- understand what they find; and
- use what they find to meet their needs.
Interesting Headlines

- Kids Make Nutritious Snacks
- New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group
- Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half
- Hospitals are Sued by 7 Foot Doctors
- Teacher Strikes Idle Kids
- Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures
“No one technique defines plain language. Rather, plain language is defined by results – it is easy to read, understand, and use.”

Additional information can be found: www.plainlanguage.gov
“Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.”

--Mark Twain
Teach Back

Teach back is a way to confirm that you have explained to the patient what they need to know in a manner that the patient understands.
Parent Health Literacy Project

Based upon book

**What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick**

by Gloria Mayer & Ann Kuklierus

Published by the Institute for Healthcare Advancement
Program Funding…

“Healthier Kansans through Improved Health Literacy”

- Grant from the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
- Matching State Medicaid funds
What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick

- Covers 50 common childhood illnesses, injuries, and health problems, such as:
  - Fever
  - Sore Throat
  - Cold and Flu
  - Throwing Up
  - Stomach Pain
What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick

For each condition, the book answers

5 questions:

- What is it?
- What do I see?
- What can I do at home?
- When do I call the doctor or nurse?
- What else should I know about it?
What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick

- Written at a 4th grade level for parents and caregivers of children from birth to eight years of age.

- Available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean.
What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick

- National research has shown that, when parents are given the book, and trained on its usage, it helps:
  - parents manage their children’s care
  - decrease non-emergent use of the ER
  - decrease the number of days children miss school and parents miss work
The Vision

All parents will have the knowledge to make appropriate choices about their children’s health care for minor illness and injury, resulting in healthier children, better resource utilization and decreased costs.
Program Goals

- Professionals working with families understand the impact of low health literacy in health care.

- Professionals use research-based methods to teach parents how to use the book *What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick*. Outreach efforts to parents of children enrolled in Medicaid and HealthWave have been a priority.

- Parents receive the book and instruction on its use, then use it to help make appropriate choices about their children’s health care.
Training of Practitioners

A 4-hour training of Practitioners who will be working with parents includes:

- Health Literacy, the impact of low health literacy, and health literacy skills
- Identification of and effective instruction with low literacy parents
- Organizational format of the book and the curriculum materials developed for use with educating parents
Project Materials

- What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick books*
- Parent Training Guide**
- CD**
- DVD **

* Available in 5 languages.
** Available in English & Spanish.
Before training:

Only 3% of parents participating in KHSA health literacy training reported that they had a health book in their homes.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

After training:
- Doctor’s visits decreased by 46%
- ER visits decreased by 55%
- “School” days missed decreased by 64%
- Work missed decreased by over half

Parents reported 82% increased confidence taking care of their children’s illnesses.

Kansas Counties with Parent Health Literacy Projects

Light blue = Counties with active projects
Dark blue = Counties with interest in project
Program implementation in Kansas since May 2011…

- Trained over 265 Participants from 98 sites
- Have programs in over 60 Kansas counties
- Distributed over 7,350 books to Kansas sites
Health Literacy Kansas

Our Mission...

Advancing health literacy to improve health outcomes while lowering costs for Kansans.
Health Literacy Kansas

*Our Vision...*

Kansans and Health Providers can effectively communicate health information to promote optimal health and reduce costs.
Health Literacy Kansas

**Advisory Council Membership**

- American Academy of Pediatrics, Kansas Chapter
- AMERI GROUP
- Children’s Mercy Hospitals & Clinic
- Children’s Mercy Pediatric Care Network
- Coventry Health Care of Kansas
- Craig HomeCare
- Kansas Academy of Family Physicians
- Kansas Assn for the Medically Underserved
- Kansas Assn of Public Health Departments
- Kansas Cavity-Free Kids
- Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
- KDHE, Bureau of Community Health System
- KDHE, Center for Health Equity
- Kansas Department of Children & Families
- Kansas Foundation for Medical Care, Inc.
- Kansas Head Start Association
- Kansas Health Consumer Coalition
- Kansas Hospital Association
- Kansas Parents as Teachers Assn
- Kansas Parish Nurse Ministry
- Reach Out and Read Kansas City
- Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library
- Unicare Health Plan of Kansas
- UnitedHealthcare Community Plan-Kansas
- KU Center for Research on Learning
- University of Kansas Medical Center
- KUMC - Area Health Education Centers
Kansas Health Literacy

Summit

October 1, 2012

Held in conjunction with the Kansas Public Health Association’s Annual Conference
Region VII Collaboration in Health Literacy

- Organizing a webinar for key stakeholders in each state to share ideas, and explore collaborative opportunities.
- Organizing a larger regional meeting to share promising practices.
- Keeping regular contact through email and conference calls
- Selecting Health People 2020 objectives to focus the health literacy work
- Developing a speakers’ bureau and web site support
Finding the Right Words for Better Health
Resources

- www.plainlanguage.gov
- www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/
- www.ama-assn.org
- www.nces.ed.gov/naal/
- www.ahrq.gov
- www.lincs.ed.gov
- www.jointcommission.org/Advancing_Effective_Communication/
- www.health.gov/communication/HLActionPlan/
For additional information...

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