

# Promoting Health Literacy in Your Practice

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Around one fourth of the United States population does not have adequate health literacy<sup>1</sup>. Health literacy is defined as the ability to obtain, read, understand, and apply healthcare information<sup>2</sup>. Patients with lower education, English as a second language and other poor social determinants of health are more prone to poor health literacy<sup>3</sup>. These patients are also at an increased risk for worse health outcomes of chronic disease states and are less likely to ask questions due to reduced health literacy<sup>4</sup>.

## Recommendations:

Health literacy should be considered as an important aspect of healthcare quality. There are several research studies that have shown that health literacy is associated with improved health outcomes because it allows patients to be engaged and involved in their health. Patients are also more likely to be adherent to their medications and make better health related decisions when they understand the health information. Therefore, it is important to consider health literacy as a vital quality measure in pharmacies/clinics and ensure that employees are getting enough training to implement this in their practice.

These resources provide health literacy training for employees.

- <https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/professional-training/index.html>
- <https://www.nlm.gov/guides/intro-health-literacy>

The opportunity exists to involve patients or patient panels in the development of tools. This resource provides information on patient engagement

- <https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/patient-education/index.html>

Table 1. contains a list of resources useful for pharmacies/clinics verifying health literacy in their practice which includes:

- A direct link to the website
- A description for each resource.
- A summary of what each resource contains and how it can be used by health organizations to improve health literacy.

**Table 1. Resources:**

Website Link	Description	How the resource can be utilized
<a href="https://www.hrsa.gov/about/organization/bureaus/ohe/health-literacy">https://www.hrsa.gov/about/organization/bureaus/ohe/health-literacy</a>	<b>Health Resources &amp; Services Administration (HRSA)</b> - provides information about the Office of Health Equity (OHE) and its work on health literacy. It also provides information and resources on health literacy and	Healthcare professionals can use this resource to learn about the definition, importance, and impact of health literacy on individuals and communities. This information can help healthcare professionals understand the role of health

	<p>cultural and linguistic competency for diverse populations, aimed at improving the health and well-being of those populations.</p>	<p>literacy in their patients' health outcomes and tailor their communication and education strategies accordingly.</p>
<p><a href="https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/health-literacyhealthy-people-2030">https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/health-literacyhealthy-people-2030</a></p>	<p><b>Health Literacy in Healthy People 2030</b> - recommends organizations to be health literate by providing information about the health literacy priority area of Healthy People 2030. It aims to improve the health and well-being of the American people by promoting health literacy. It also provides information on the goals, objectives, and leading health indicators for the health literacy priority area.</p>	<p>This resource can be used by healthcare professionals to become health literate as it provides guidance and action steps to improve health literacy in different sectors such as healthcare providers, health systems, communication and community organizations.</p>
<p><a href="https://www.nlm.gov/guides/intro-health-literacy">https://www.nlm.gov/guides/intro-health-literacy</a></p>	<p><b>The National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM)</b> - is a resource guide that provides information about health literacy with a goal to help librarians and other healthcare professionals understand and address the issue of health literacy. The guide provides an overview of health literacy, including its definition, importance, and the impact of low health literacy on individuals and communities. It also includes strategies and resources for promoting health literacy, such as working with community partners and providing health information in plain language.</p>	<p>The resource can be used by healthcare professionals to improve the quality of care they provide by helping patients understand health information, make informed decisions, and take an active role in their own health care.</p>
<p><a href="https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/improve/organizational.html">https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/improve/organizational.html</a></p>	<p><b>The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)</b> - focuses on providing information and resources for healthcare organizations and professionals to improve health literacy in their practice.</p>	<p>It provides information and resources on how healthcare organizations can assess their current health literacy practices, implement changes to improve health literacy, and measure the impact of those changes.</p>

<a href="https://www.unitypoint.org/health-literacy-guidebook.aspx">https://www.unitypoint.org/health-literacy-guidebook.aspx</a>	<p><b>UnityPoint Health</b> - is a healthcare system that provides healthcare professionals with information and resources to improve health literacy in their practice, by providing plain language communication, identifying patients at risk, implementing best practices, and evaluating and measuring outcomes</p>	<p>It provides information on best practices and evidence-based interventions that can be used by healthcare professionals to promote health literacy in their practice.</p>
<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/index.html">https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/index.html</a>	<p><b>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</b> website on health literacy provides information and resources for healthcare professionals, organizations and the public to improve health literacy and promote effective communication and understanding of health information.</p>	<p>It can help healthcare professionals identify patients who may be at risk for low health literacy, such as older adults, immigrants, and those with low education levels. It also offers strategies and tools for providing health information in plain language to improve communication with patients and help them understand and act on health information.</p>
<a href="https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication/health-literacy">https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication/health-literacy</a>	<p><b>The National Institutes of Health (NIH)</b> - on health literacy provides information and resources for healthcare professionals, organizations, and the public to improve health literacy and promote effective communication and understanding of health information.</p>	<p>This resource can help healthcare professionals identify other organizations working on health literacy and identify opportunities for collaboration. It provides information on health literacy research, including studies and publications.</p>

A plan to provide opportunities to improve health literacy includes educating staff, involving patients in the process of engagement, and ongoing evaluation. Using these resources can guide a charitable pharmacy/clinic in measuring preparedness and providing quality health literate services.

**References:**

1. Nearly one-fourth of US population has low health literacy: 5 findings. Becker Hospital Review website. Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/patient-experience/nearly-one-fourth-of-us-population-has-low-health-literacy-5->

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2. Health Literacy Online. Health website. <https://health.gov/our-work/national-health-initiatives/health-literacy/health-literacy-online#:~:text=Health%20literacy%20is%20the%20degree%20to%20which%20individuals>

3. Hickey KT, Creber RMM, Reading M, et al. Low health literacy. *The Nurse practitioner*. 2018;43(8):49-55. doi:10.1097/01.NPR.0000541468.54290.49

4. Social Determinants of Health. Centers for Disease Control website. Published October 24, 2022. Accessed November 17, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/programs-impact/sdoh.htm#:~:text=Interventions%20targeting%20SDOH%20have%20tremendous%20potential%20to%20narrow>