

Health Literacy Resources

A. Websites with easy-to-read materials

1. Hamilton Health Sciences-Education-Patient Education Services -

<http://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/sites/patienteducation/plainlanguage.htm>

This website actually includes both easy to read materials and information on health literacy. The home page introduces the topic of health literacy, why it is important to health care providers, and tips on how to write in plain language. Information on the quality of patient care materials, standards for quality of the materials and planning guides for educational materials are also included. Finally, a large pool of plain language reading materials is accessible. Topics for the plain language reading materials include the heart, infection control, breastfeeding, nutrition, brain injury, medicine and community health, and surgery.

2. U. S. Food and Drug Administration Easy to Read Publications -

<http://www.fda.gov/opacom/lowlit/7lowlit.html>

Easy to read medical information publications are included in both Spanish and English. This site is very credible, and has a variety of lively, picture-laden handouts on various health related topics. All brochures are colorful and easy to read. Handouts are available for printing directly from the website. Examples of topics include healthy nutrition for the heart and the elderly, quick information on diabetes, protecting children from poison, mammograms, and weight loss. Most of the topics would be suited for community or public health nurses to distribute to their clientele.

3. Channing Bete Company - <http://www.channing-bete.com/>

Channing Bete Company specializes in producing easy to read health brochures and handouts. This for profit company provides plain language material that is economical and guaranteed. The publications are available in a wide variety of reading levels, and are geared towards children/teens, parents/families and health care patients and providers. An interesting feature of this website is the availability of personalization of the brochures. Personalization options include room for placing your name, special messages, graphics, appointment cards, etc. Customized covers and inserts are also optional. Translators are also on-staff.

4. Health and Literacy Compendium

<http://www.worlded.org/us/health/docs/comp/index.html>

The health and literacy compendium was produced in order to provide a diversity of web and print based health materials for use with low-literacy adults. There are a variety of topics, including books, reports and journals on what low health literacy is, how to assess and develop plain language materials, and curricula for use in literacy classrooms and community settings. There is also a huge database of websites that contain information on a wide variety of health related topics, from headaches, diabetes, to hysterectomies. Each specific health topic is accompanied by an annotated bibliography.

5. FirstFind.Info - <http://www.firstfind.info/default.html>

This website contains a massive database of a variety of easy to read fact sheets on health problems. It is slightly difficult to find the health related sections because FirstFind is very large and has databases on many more topics than health. On the front page, hit "Click here to enter the FirstFind.info library," and then scroll down to health to access the health related materials. The site specializes in providing easy to read materials, so would be an excellent resource for providers to find easy to read publications for their clients. Almost all basic illnesses and diseases are covered in this library, with a great variety of formats for the handouts. One interesting medium for relaying the health information is what is called an x-plain tutorial, which is an online, web-based method of distributing information.

6. Health Check: A Health and Literacy Program -

<http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/adultlit/hlthchk/contents.htm>

This health and literacy program provides easy to read materials on a wide variety of topics. The topics that are covered include: Healthy eating, smoking, alcohol, active living, relationships, and STD's/AIDS. These materials are available as PDF files, or click-able buttons on the web page itself. The format for the handouts is interesting and interactive. They begin with instructions for the instructors, and then have anecdotes from fictitious characters regarding the topic at hand. This site would be perfect for the health care provider that is willing to spend a good deal of time with the client.

7. Vancouver Native Health Society - <http://www.vnhs.net/home2.html>

The Vancouver Native Health Society has a variety of colorful, lively patient education handouts on female reproductive health, alcohol and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis. Each of the handouts is in a slide format, with large, bold lettering and colorful pictures on each slide.

8. Healthy Facts - <http://familydoctor.org/cgi-bin/list.pl?element=healthfact>

Healthy Facts would be an excellent site for a health care provider to recommend a client to visit to find easy to read materials on a wide variety of health related topics. These topics include everything from HIV/AIDS to breast cancer to hemorrhoids. Spanish versions of most of the material are available. The material is available to view both online and in a brochure format. The online material is not lively, but is easy to read and informative. Brochures are available in bulk quantity for a price. Those interested should look in the online catalog.

9. University of California at San Francisco -

<http://itsa.ucsf.edu/~hclinic/handouts.dir/lowlit.dir/lowlit.html>

Medical student developed these handouts for clients in a homeless shelter. There are a wide variety of very simple, plain language handouts. The handouts are black and white, with pictures and comprehensive yet simplistic information on a variety of topics that would pertain to the homeless clientele. Examples of topics included are: asthma, bronchitis, back pain, ibuprofen, lice and STD's.

10. Health Touch

http://www.healthtouch.com/bin/Econtent_HT/hdinfo.asp?cid=HTHLTH

Health Touch has a wide variety of information on health related topics. This website would be instrumental in aiding the health care provider to teach their clients about their illness. While much of the material is not presented at a very low literacy level, it is presented in a format that would aid the high school educated low health literate client.

11. NIDDK- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

<http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/eztoread.htm#dig> The NIDDK website is used for many purposes. Doctors and other health care professionals can utilize the website for their own benefit or for the benefit of other patients. The web link above allows health professionals to print off health information for patients. Information on Diabetes, Digestive diseases, Kidney diseases, and Urologic diseases is available. The link provides reading material at about a sixth grade reading level and has many pictures to go along with the text. With each section, a dictionary is provided with the terms used to describe and manage the diseases. Also disease description and disease management strategies are given.

12. NN/LM-National Network of Libraries of Medicine

<http://nmlm.gov/hip/easy.html#cancer> This web page gives links to many easy-to-read health and medical sites. Most of the sites contain pictures. Some examples of the keywords you can click on to access these easy-to-read sites are: diabetes, kidneys, AIDS and HIV, cancer, heart problems, and mental health.

13. Healthfinder - <http://www.healthfinder.gov/aboutus/> healthfinder® is an award-winning Federal Web site, developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services together with other Federal agencies. Since 1997, healthfinder® has been recognized as a key resource for finding the best government and nonprofit health and human services information on the Internet. healthfinder® links to carefully selected information and Web sites from over 1,800 health-related organizations. There is a health library feature where you can browse by each letter of the alphabet for in the sections of: all topics, prevention and wellness, diseases and conditions, alternative medicine, and featured topics. Also there is a just for you feature with selected health topics organized for men and women, by age from kids to seniors, by race and ethnicity, and for parents, caregivers, health professionals, and others.

14. National Institutes of Health- <http://health.nih.gov/> This is a good website for health information that is easy to read for patients. You can browse health topics alphabetically, you can perform your own search for health topics, or find health topics by categories. Titles of the categories include: body location/systems, common conditions/diseases, health and wellness, procedures, and demographic groups. Other major headings that are on the page that can be accessed are: clinical studies, drug information, library references, special programs, and other health information agencies.

15. National Cancer Institute- <http://cancer.gov/cancerinfo/> This web site gives all the

latest news on cancer information. It has an alphabetic search for all of the different types of cancer. Along with the different types of cancer, other headings that the web page contains are: treatment options, prevention strategies, coping with cancer, and support/resources. The web site is pretty easy to navigate and is credible. When information on the certain types of cancer and its treatment options are given, pictures are provided to allow the patient to get a better understanding of the information.

16. Virtual Hospital- <http://www.vh.org/index.html> This website is put on by the University of Iowa. This web site is a great site for easy to read medical information for adult and pediatric patients and is easily navigable. There are booklets and brochures that health care professionals can print out for patients. Health topics are alphabetized from A to Z covering anything from abdominal pain to women's health. Some booklets are available in languages other than English, such as Spanish, German, and Portuguese. The information on other languages is continuing to grow on the website. Other features on the website include health topics in the spotlight for the current month and in the news.

17. Mayo Clinic- <http://www.mayoclinic.com/index.cfm> Mayo Clinic's mission is to empower people to manage their health. This is a very credible website for patient health information with over 2,000 physicians and scientists involved. There is information on diseases and conditions from A to Z and disease and condition centers can be accessed to give patients more information and tools to help patients manage conditions. Examples of some of the centers include: allergies, cancer, and blood pressure. There is also a healthy living feature that provides a collection of information and tools to help patients stay healthy. Examples include: baby's health and food and nutrition. Drug searches can also be performed and information on almost any drug can be accessed to give to patients. Other features that the website offers are for patients questions to be answered by one of the Mayo Clinic physicians, and booklets and brochures on certain health topics for sale.

18. Aetna Intellihealth- <http://www.Intelihealth.com/IH/intIH/WSIHW000/408/408.html> Intellihealth is a great site for health information produced by a reliable and respected source, the Harvard Medical Schools. This site is very similar to the Mayo Clinic site in that information can be accessed on diseases and conditions from A to Z, much information is available in ways to lead a health lifestyle, and drug searches can be accomplished. Also, there is specific health information dealing with men and women's health for example. The information that is accessed for patients on this site is easy to read and the site itself is very navigable.

19. Medicinenet- <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/hp.asp> This web link consists of a network of U.S. Board Certified Physicians and Allied Health Professionals that work together to provide the public with current, comprehensive medical information written in an easy to read format. This link is very credible and navigable. Main topics included on the web link include information on diseases and conditions, procedures and tests, medications, medical terms, and current health news and facts. There are also pictures to go along with some of the health information.

20. The Ohio State University Medical Center *

<http://www.medicalcenter.osu.edu/patientcare/healthinformation/education>

This site has over 2,000 health-related topics, all written by health professionals at the medical center and all below 8th grade reading level. Most of the handouts have illustrations. There are also materials in Somali and Spanish. The resource section has documents for the health professional that will assist them in teaching their patients. A section on websites for other language materials and information about other cultures is also available.

21. Medline Plus * http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/easytoread/easytoread_a.html

This site is a service from the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health. It contains a large inventory of easy-to-read materials on all health related topics. Interactive tutorials from the Patient Education Institute are available for a number of the topics, which are ideal for those with limited literacy. The tutorials require Flash Player.

22. Healthy Roads Media * <http://www.healthyroadsmedia.org/>

This site contains free audio, written and multimedia health education materials in a number of languages.

B. Websites with information about plain language or health literacy

1. Plain Language Service - <http://www.pls.cpha.ca/english/faq.htm>

The purpose of this website is to first inform health care providers what plain language is and how to write in a 4th to 6th grade level for plain language. More than providing information about plain language, this website gives information on a plain language service, which will take highly technical patient handouts and transcribe into plain language for a fee. The service will assess your paper and revise, giving you a final plain language handout. The service seems credible, with a large list of prestigious clients, and has a very navigable site. The site will be helpful for the health care provider who is unable to write his or her own plain language handout.

2. LINCS * Health and Literacy - <http://www.worlded.org/us/health/lincs/facts.htm>

This comprehensive and credible website is one of the principal locations for literacy * related information for children, youth and adults. This easily navigable website is a service of the National Institute for Literacy and is huge, with statistics, information on why health literacy and plain language materials are important, how to make your community more health literate. A key page on this site is the health care provider resources page, which contains a list of other websites with health literacy information and plain language handouts.

Harvard School of Public Health

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/index.html>

This is another easy website to navigate, which is comprehensive and highly credible and

contains a massive amount of information about health literacy for the health care provider. The website includes an introduction to the topic of health literacy, research reports on health and literacy, innovative health education materials, a section on 'how to' create and evaluate plain language handouts, curricula on health literacy, insights from researchers, practitioners, adult learners and patients and links to other websites.

4. National Literacy and Health Program - <http://www.nlhp.cpha.ca/>

The National Literacy and Health Program is developed by the Canadian Public Health Association and is geared toward educating Canadians in identifying the need to provide health information in an easy to read format. The CPHA states that it is committed to maintaining and improving personal and community health according to the public health principles of prevention, promotion, protection and effective public policy. They provided resources that help health care professionals to create easy to read publications with their Plain Language Service, and national literacy and health program projects.

5. Plain Train - <http://www.web.net/~plain/PlainTrain/IntroducingPlainLanguage.html>

The Plain Train is a training website which introduces health care professionals to the idea of plain language. The introduction to the idea of plain language seems to be effective in describing why plain language is important. By giving a list of why difficult texts cause so many problems, and how plain language writing can benefit the health care professional, it becomes apparent that this is a significant issue. After this introduction, the purpose of the website is introduced: training the health care professional in creating plain language handouts. Topics that are covered in this training website include: your reader and purpose, organizing ideas, appropriate words, simple sentences, effective paragraphs, design and testing.

6. Center for Health Care Strategies Resource Center -

<http://www.chcs.org/resource/hl.html>

The Center for Health Care Strategies Resource Center appears to be a fantastic resource for the health care provider who does not know very much about health literacy or why it is important. This web page contains links to a number of pdf files that contain information about health literacy. There are easily accessible files on what is health literacy, who is affected by health literacy, the impact of low literacy skills on annual health care expenditures, health literacy and understanding medical information, resources for health literacy, and a variety of other files. Each of these files is available to click upon right on the front page, so the site is very easy to navigate. Information about health literacy is very easy to locate on this very informative website.

7. Health Literacy Consulting - <http://www.healthliteracy.com/index.html>

Health Literacy Consulting is an online tool that helps health care organizations to communicate in ways that people can understand. It contains many programs and services to aid health care professionals in achieving this goal. The many services that Helen Osborne, the woman behind Health Literacy Month, and Health Literacy Consulting offers on this site include: consulting, training, advocating, coaching, and writing. She also offers tele-classes for a fee. Another feature of the website are online

tips that she includes for health literacy consulting and how to get a conversation about health literacy started.

8. The Clear Language Group - <http://www.clearlanguagegroup.com/aboutpl.html>

The Clear Language Group is dedicated to providing information about plain language utilization in the health care environment. This group consists of a consortium of self-proclaimed experts, and their mission states, both concisely and effectively, that plain language is very important, and that plain language is a movement that has been gaining momentum all over the world. The site contains detailed explanations of plain language as a movement and as a method. Also on the website are descriptions of their services, which include consulting and coaching, writing and editing, presenting and training, assessing materials and audiences, communicating across cultures, and producing multimedia.

9. The American Medical Association Foundation - <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/8577.html>

The American Medical Association Foundation declares that it is the first national medical organization that has made health literacy a priority. They have a nice section on health literacy within their massive website. Click on the link above to go to a description on how the AMA defines health literacy, and why they think that it is important. Then, type 'health literacy' into their search engine to pull up a large list of links to health literacy related pages within their website. Links to an 'increasing health literacy' web cast, biannual health literacy updates, health literacy news, and a list of each states' health literacy programs can be found within this search.

10. Health Literacy.org - www.healthliteracy.org/

Health Literacy.org is a website that collects concepts and materials on health education and discussed models and initiatives in the promotion of health literacy in a cross-cultural setting. They utilize input from a wide variety of cultures to spread health literacy. Lists of current projects and papers concerning health literacy are available links for those interested. There is also a list of projects that have been completed by a wide variety of Chinese, German and American authors.

11. Pfizer Inc. <http://www.pfizerhealthliteracy.com> Pfizer Inc. is a research-based, global pharmaceutical company. Along with this they are heavily involved in health literacy. On this link the concept of health literacy is explained and ways to improve it are mentioned. Also, Pfizer works in accordance with other organizations to find better ways to supply patients with health information that is easier to read. Pfizer also supports programs to build the health literacy research base, to provide training on health literacy issues, and to raise awareness of health literacy to patients.

12. Health Literacy Month <http://www.healthliteracymonth.com/> The month of October is known as health literacy month and was founded by Helen Osborne. Health professionals, literacy specialists, professional associations, and healthcare organizations around the world are going to be working together to promote the need for the understanding of health information. This web site allows you to learn more about health

literacy through reading research articles and fact sheets. Some of the fact sheets provided deal with issues such as: "What is Health Literacy? Who has Health Literacy Problems? And How to Prepare Patient Education Materials."

13. The Institute for Healthcare Advancement

<http://www.ih4health.org/healthliteracy.html> This website defines health literacy and gives some background information on how health literacy affects our lives and tells us who is affected by it. This site puts out books to buy on topics such as what to do when you are having a baby. The reading material in these books is easy for patients to read. There are also fact sheets with topics such as: how extensive is the problem of low literacy in non-native speakers of English? and what general relationships exist between illiteracy and poor health? The Institute for Healthcare Advancement also holds an annual health literacy conference. An overview of the second annual health literacy conference is available to people who visit this web site.

14. Washington State Department of Health

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/here/howto/images/easy2.html> This web site gives guidelines for developing easy-to-read health information. The guidelines are as follows: 1. Start with an Open Mind, 2. Develop a concept paper, 3. Involve a professional designer early in the developmental process, 4. Pre-test with the target audience, 5. Write simply and clearly for low literacy audiences, 6. Develop translations directly for the target audience, 7. Know how to order printing. Also, the Office of Health Promotion recommends resources.

15. The Plain Language Association International-

<http://www.plainlanguagenetwork.org/kimble/critics.htm#intro> This web link is pretty straightforward. Information on this web page does not deal directly with health information, but is a good web link for learning about plain language and how important it is in any profession. This link answers the old and new criticisms of plain language. The new criticism that is argued against is that there is no evidence that plain language improves comprehension. The writer of this link then goes on to give evidenced-based research to support his claim. This is a good web link to see some proven research that plain language does work and is very user friendly and credible. Also, the writer goes pretty in-depth on what makes plain language writing different from your normal style of professional writing.

16. ERIC- <http://www.cal.org/ncle/digests/healthlitQA.htm> This web link's main purpose deals with health literacy and adult English language learners. An introduction of what health literacy is and the history of health literacy instruction are discussed first on this link. The question regarding how literacy and health professionals are responding to health literacy needs is addressed. Obstacles that learners of English as a second language might encounter and the challenges that instructors of English as a second language might face are also discussed. Finally the kinds of activities that develop health literacy and final conclusions that can be drawn are given. This link is very easy to understand and is easy to navigate.

17. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/education/news/improving_health_literacy.asp

This website is very easy to read, to the point, and credible. This link answers many questions dealing with health literacy such as: What is health literacy? Why is health literacy an issue for health communication professionals? What is the health literacy

objective in Healthy People 2010? Can better communication strategies improve health? Why does NIDCD have a special interest in health literacy? And where can I learn more about health literacy? With this last question, there are eight other sources listed dealing with the issue of health literacy.

18. The Council of State Governments-

<http://www.csg.org/CSG/Policy/health/importance+of+HL.htm> This web page would be very beneficial for any healthcare provider. The issue of health literacy is defined and is brought to the forefront of the political arena. This web page provides fact sheets that pose such questions as: Why is health literacy important? Who is affected by low health literacy? What is the impact of low health literacy? What are states doing to address health literacy? What can policymakers do to address health literacy? Also, some credible health literacy links and resources are listed on this web page.

19. American Medical Association-

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/5154.html> This web site is highly credible and is a simple one-page link that really hits home on the issue of health literacy. The title of the web page is; Through the Patient's Eyes. It brings up the idea of what do patients really know when they leave your office or clinic. Four real life examples of people who deal everyday with problems in understanding their doctor's orders are heard out. They explain how hard it is for them to understand what their doctor's are telling them when they go in for a first time visit or a checkup. The web page also elaborates on the effects that health illiteracy has on the patient-physician relationship. Lastly, ways physicians can help these patients better understand what is being said to them is discussed.

20. Eric- <http://ericacve.org/docs/pab00016.pdf> This web page gives an educational brief discussing the role of low literacy in determining health outcomes. The four solutions mentioned in the Healthy People 2010 report- readability of health materials, improving health communications, changing individual behaviors, and using approaches that empower the patient are discussed. Also, the trends affecting health and literacy are discussed and the connection between health and literacy is made. This is a very informative two-page article that would be great for every healthcare provider to read and take note of.

21. Harvard University School of Public Health

http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/litreview_final.pdf This web based research article is a very good resource for healthcare providers to look at to see what is going on in the world of health literacy. This research article is a review of Medical and Public health literature dealing with the subject of health and literacy and comes from Harvard. Many key points are discussed such as; literacy in the United States, links between education and health, barriers to health communication, linking literacy to health-related outcomes, strategies for improving communication, trends in the literature, and implications for research. All of these topics are discussed in depth in this twenty-eight-page research article.

Partnership for Clear Health Communication- <http://www.askme3.org>

This site provides information on a new program called Ask Me3, which has information for patients, providers, and organizations about how to meet the low health literacy challenge. The program has free materials that can be ordered to help institute the program in a health setting. The program's main focus is to improve patient-provider communication by helping patients learn the 3 most important questions to ask their doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

California Health Literacy Initiative * <http://www.cahealthliteracy.org/>

This site provides information about this initiative in California. The health literacy resource center has documents on general health literacy information, plain language health resources, multicultural and multilingual information, health literacy research and publications, and health literacy clip art.

National Institute for Literacy * <http://www.nifl.gov>

The NIFL is authorized by the US congress to provide national leadership regarding literacy, coordinate literacy services and policy, and serve as a national resource for adult education and literacy programs. Although materials are not specific to health literacy, there are a number of documents that help one understand the field of literacy and its impact.

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