

Health Literacy

A Discussion with the Partnership for
Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Planning Consortium of
Volusia and Flagler Counties

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Florida Literacy Coalition

Overview

- Health Literacy 101
- Perspective
- Health Literacy & HIV/AIDS Care
- Getting Started
- Questions/Discussion



What is Health Literacy?

health literacy

noun / 'helth 'li-t(ə-)rə-sē

: capacity to obtain, process,
and understand basic health
information and services to make
appropriate health decisions

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). *Healthy People 2010* (2nd ed.) Washington, DC

Scope of the Problem

- ▣ 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy
 - ▣ 19,000 adults
 - ▣ First nationwide assessment of health literacy
- ▣ 88% of those surveyed were NOT proficient!



Scope of the Problem

- ▣ 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy
 - ▣ 19,000 adults
- ▣ Estimated 90 million people are NOT ****proficient**** in health literacy.
- ▣ Includes a disproportionate number of individuals from vulnerable populations:
 - ▣ Low socio-economic status
 - ▣ Racial and ethnic minorities
 - ▣ Elderly

How important is HL?

Health literacy is a stronger predictor of a person's health than age, income, employment status, education level, or race.

How important is HL?

- ▣ Compared to those with proficient HL, adults with low HL have:
 - ▣ 4 times higher health care costs
 - ▣ Increased risk of hospitalization
 - ▣ Longer hospital stays (average: 2 days) and higher re-admissions
 - ▣ Increased mortality
- ▣ Estimated direct cost of impact on U.S. economy:

3.6 TRILLION

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Perspective

Don't take my word for it...



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgTuD7I7LG8>

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Impact on Outcomes

- ▣ Low HL is strongly associated with poor chronic disease management.
- ▣ Lower HL patients are less likely to take and adhere to treatment.
- ▣ Higher HL increases probability of treatment retention and is associated with better health outcomes
 - ▣ CD4 count
 - ▣ Viral Suppression

Health literacy and patient knowledge in a Southern US HIV clinic

- ▣ Interviews with 157 patients at a community-care clinic
 - ▣ 48% of patients were reading below a 9th grade level.
 - ▣ One-third of patients could not name their HIV medications (significantly related to low literacy).
 - ▣ Two-thirds of those reading below the 9th grade level did not know how to take their medications correctly
 - ▣ 75% did not know the meaning of a CD4 count or viral load.
 - ▣ Patients with low literacy skills were more likely to state that their physician was their sole source of HIV information.

Wolf MS, Davis TC, Cross JT, Marin E, Green K, Bennett CL. Health literacy and patient knowledge in a Southern US HIV clinic. *Int J STD AIDS*. 2004 Nov;15(11):747-52

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Addressing Health Literacy

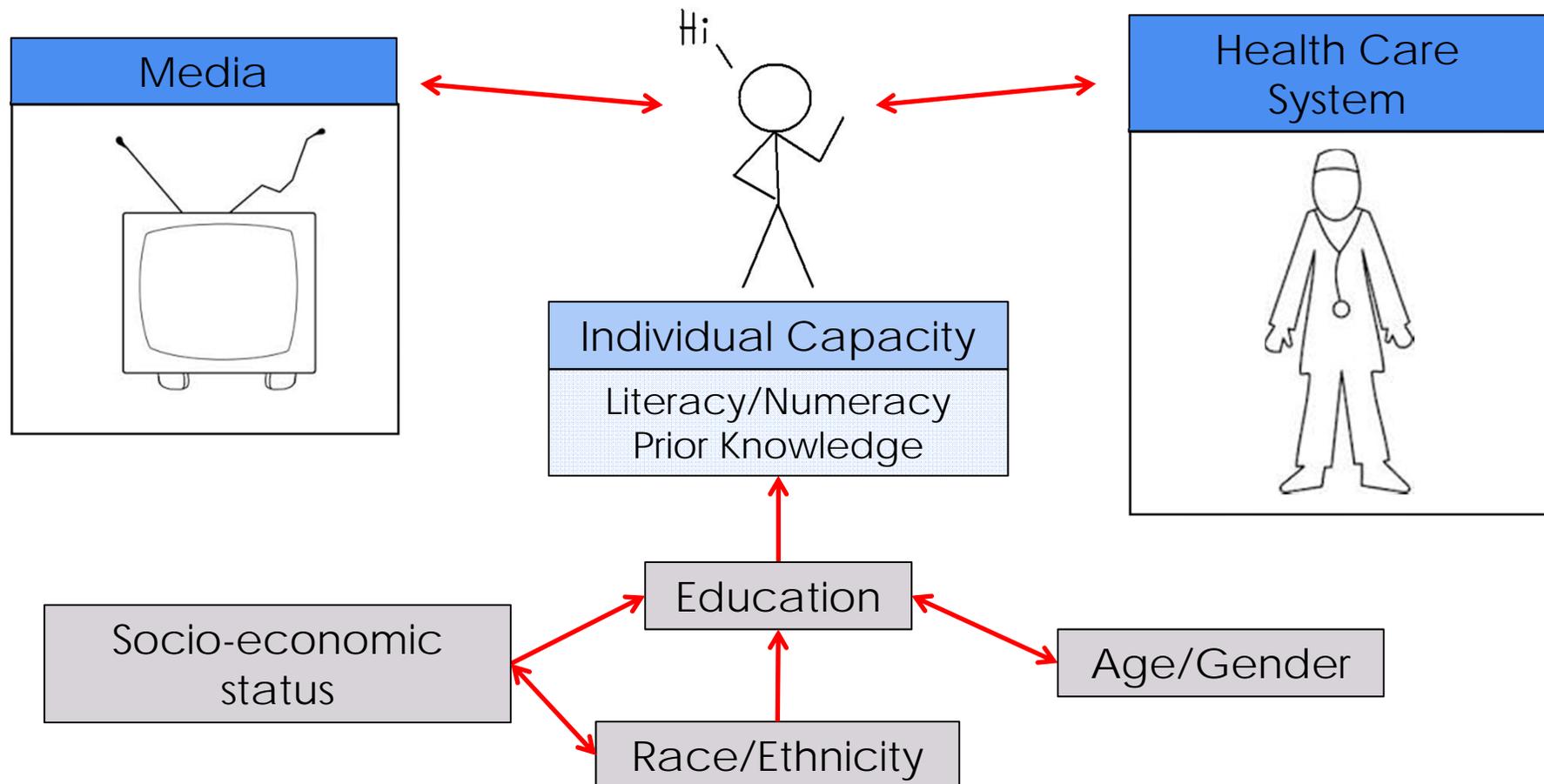
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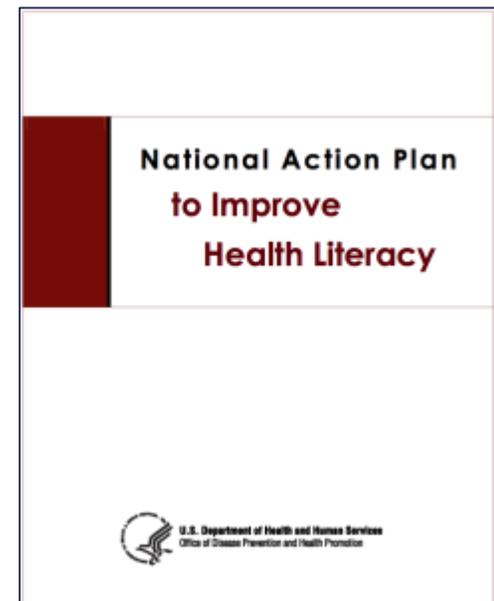
Getting Started

To improve HL, increase capacity!



We have to start somewhere

- HL is a population-level public health issue that requires a system-wide response
- DHHS National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy
 - Provides everyone with access to accurate and actionable health information
 - Delivers person-centered health information and services
 - Supports lifelong learning and skills to promote good health



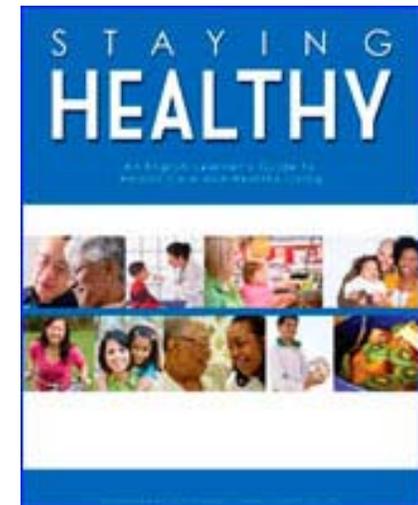
Getting Started

Pop Quiz



Universal Precautions

- ▣ Print materials
 - ▣ 1 in 5 adults read at 5th grade level or below
 - ▣ Average American is 8th-9th grade level
 - ▣ Most health care materials written at 10th grade or higher
- ▣ Research indicates that ALL patients prefer medical information that is easy to read and understand
 - ▣ However, for those with low HL, this is ESSENTIAL



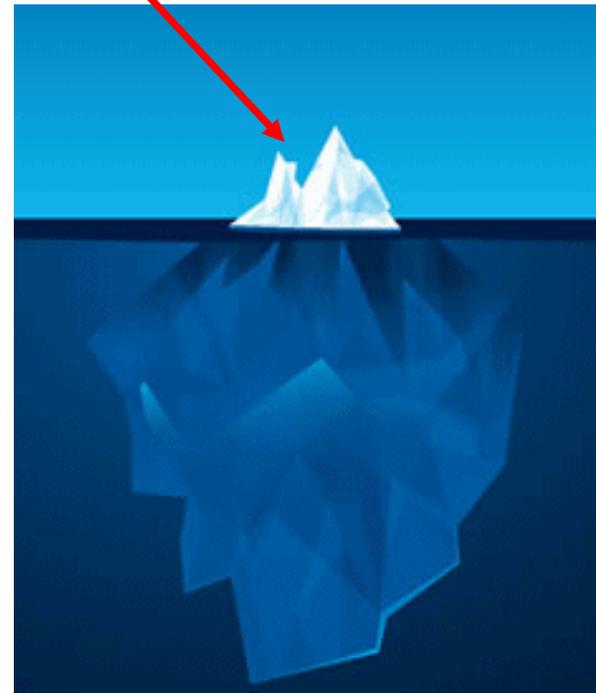
Patient-Centered Care

- ▣ Organizational Assessments
 - ▣ Toolkits are available for evaluating organizational approach to patient care and HL
 - ▣ Offer guidance on implementing change
 - ▣ Currently hospital focused, but clinic and primary care tools are being developed
 - ▣ Patient Assessments
 - ▣ Several tools available for determining health literacy levels in individuals
 - ▣ Work-in-progress
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Take-Home Messages

- ▣ Health Literacy is OUR problem
- ▣ Fundamental to patient-centered care
- ▣ We can't afford to ignore any longer

You Are Here



Thank you!

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