Plain Language in Different Contexts

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CONTEXT: Websites
# How Low Literacy Readers Process Webpages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficient Readers</th>
<th>Below Basic Readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quickly scan the text to find what they want, and scroll down for more</td>
<td>Distracted, choose first answer, don’t scroll for more, have trouble recovering from mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily identify key features and content</td>
<td>Focuses on each word and slowly “plow” the text line by line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can glance at a list of navigation options and select the one they want</td>
<td>Spends more time, reads each word in each option carefully or completely skips over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use search function and dig deeper to find what they want</td>
<td>Challenged by spelling and results, will give up digging deeper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Differences

• Users are looking to answer specific questions and don’t stay long
• Navigation is added challenge, requires advanced skills
• Web search function requires spelling and content knowledge
• Opportunity for non-text information

Plain Language 2.0

Content

• Place most important information first
• Keep above the fold (minimize scrolling)
• Write in plain language
• Make web content printer friendly
• Include non web contact information
• Use images that help people learn

Plain Language 2.0

Display

• Create simple, engaging homepage
• Make buttons large, with meaningful labels
• Use bold meaningful headers
• Limit paragraph size
• Use plain language design principles: bullet point, white space, bold font, high contrast

Plain Language 2.0

Navigation

• Use consistent page layout
• Create linear navigation
• Minimize scrolling
• Provide easy access to home and menu
• Make search function tolerant of misspellings
• Make sure “back” button works

https://health.gov/healthliteracyonline/
Health Literacy Online: A Guide to Developing User-friendly Websites

https://health.gov/healthliteracyonline/checklist/
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CONTEXT:
High Reliability Organizations
Effective Communication is the Cornerstone of Patient Safety

- **Recommendations**
  - Make effective communications an organization priority to promote patient safety
  - Recognize, anticipate, and act on potential patient harm or risk
  - Mitigate or avoid risk through system change

AMA Foundation, 2007

The Joint Commission, 2007
Swiss Cheese Model: Adapted from James Reason

**LATENT (Health Literacy) FAILURES**

- Lack of awareness of the risks of low Health Literacy
- Failure to see red flags
- Busy, unwelcoming
- Doesn’t check understanding
- Too much information
- Not understanding what patient needs to know
- Failure to involve patients
- Uses jargon, technical words
- Too technical

**Triggers**

- No trained Interpreters
- Signs hard to read
- Questions not invited
- Too much information
- Failure to see red flags
- Lack of awareness of the risks of low Health Literacy
- Too technical
- Uses jargon, technical words

**DEFENSES**

- Staff Preparation
- Interpersonal Skills
- Patient Involvement
- Written Materials
- Care Environment

The World

Harm
High-Reliability, Health Literate Organization

How do we promote consistent and effective use of teach back?

• Apply the right way, the right time, **every time**
• Embed in standard operating practices, job descriptions, competencies
• Stablish health literacy bundle

Health Literacy Bundle

- Shame free environment
- Avoid jargon language
- Check of understanding (teach-back)
- Use plain language teaching tools
- Provide language assistance (if need)
- Document results
AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit

- **Everyone** benefits from information that is clear and easy to act on.
- Many patients are at risk of misunderstanding but it is difficult to identify them.
- Optimize communication can prevent communication-related adverse events.

Activity
Small group discussion

Complete the Health Literacy Assessment.
Discussion results and identify opportunities for improvement
Conduct a Health Literacy Audit

The Walking Interview

- Stage 1: First Impressions
- Stage 2: Asking for Help
- Stage 3: Finding 3 locations
- Stage 4: Observations
- Stage 5: Reflections
- Stage 6: Feedback

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CONTEXT:
Public Health
Health Literacy & Public Health

https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/developmaterials/index.html
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CONTEXT:
Health Insurance
Promote Health Insurance Literacy

http://www.justplainclear.com/en
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CONTEXT:
International
Health Literacy-Friendly Settings

Plain Language Needs and Opportunities

- Educational setting
- Marketplace settings
- Community settings
- Workplace settings
- Health care settings
- Environmental health
- Media and communication

• Mission to unite people around the world working to promote health literacy
• Dedicated to the professional development of our members and the field
• Inclusive of people promoting health literacy in many different contexts
• Run by and for its members

Become a members!

www.i-hla.org
Health Literacy Leadership Institute
June 10 – 14, 2019

- Advanced professional development opportunity
- Participants work on a health literacy project of their choice
- Peer learning is core to teaching and learning

Register online
http://go.tufts.edu/healthliteracyleadership/
Thank You

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