

Plain Language in Different Contexts

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Health Literacy & Plain Language

CONTEXT: Websites

How Low Literacy Readers Process Webpages

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

Source: Adapted from Nielsen J. Lower-Literacy Users. Alertbox 2005.; U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Health Literacy Online: A Guide to Writing and Designing Easy-to-use Health Web Sites. Last updated: 2016.

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

Source: U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Health Literacy Online: A Guide to Writing and Designing Easy-to-use Health Web Sites. Last updated: 2016..
<https://health.gov/healthliteracyonline/>

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

Source: U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Health Literacy Online: A Guide to Writing and Designing Easy-to-use Health Web Sites. Last updated: 2016..
<https://health.gov/healthliteracyonline/>

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

Source: U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Health Literacy Online: A Guide to Writing and Designing Easy-to-use Health Web Sites. Last updated: 2016..
<https://health.gov/healthliteracyonline/>

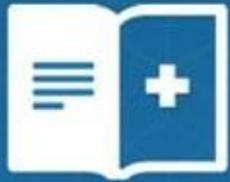
Plain Language 2.0

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

Source: U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Health Literacy Online: A Guide to Writing and Designing Easy-to-use Health Web Sites. Last updated: 2016..
<https://health.gov/healthliteracyonline/>

Health Literacy Online: A Guide to Developing User-friendly Websites



Health Literacy Online

A Guide for Simplifying the User Experience

This research-based guide will help you develop intuitive health websites and digital tools that can be easily accessed and understood by all users — including the millions of Americans who struggle to find, process, and use online health information.

<https://health.gov/healthliteracyonline/checklist/>

Health Literacy & Plain Language

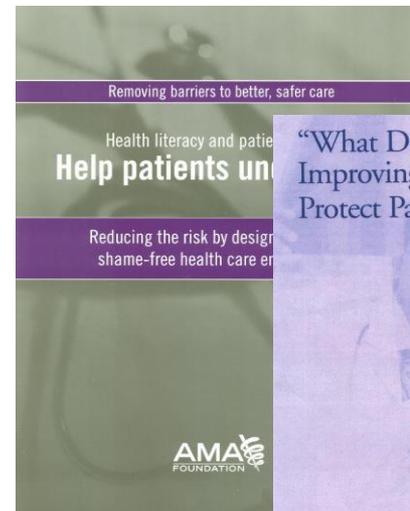
CONTEXT:

High Reliability

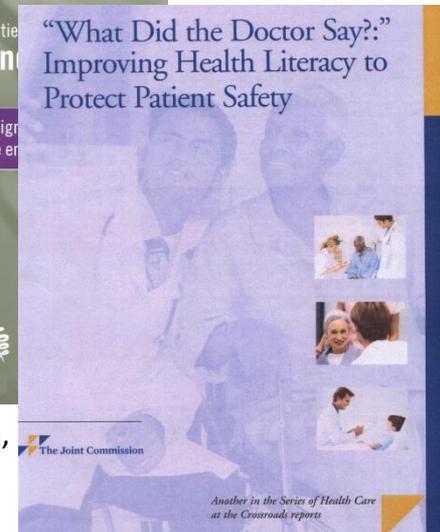
Organizations

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

Not understanding what patient needs to know

Too much information

Doesn't check understanding

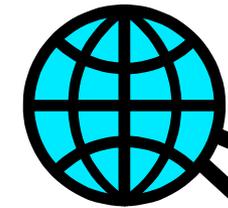
Busy, unwelcoming

Failure to see red flags

Literacy

Lack of awareness of the risks of low Health Literacy

Triggers



The World

No trained Interpreters

Signs hard to read

Questions not invited

Uses jargon, technical words

Too technical

Failure to involve patients

Harm

Staff Preparation

Interpersonal Skills

Patient Involvement

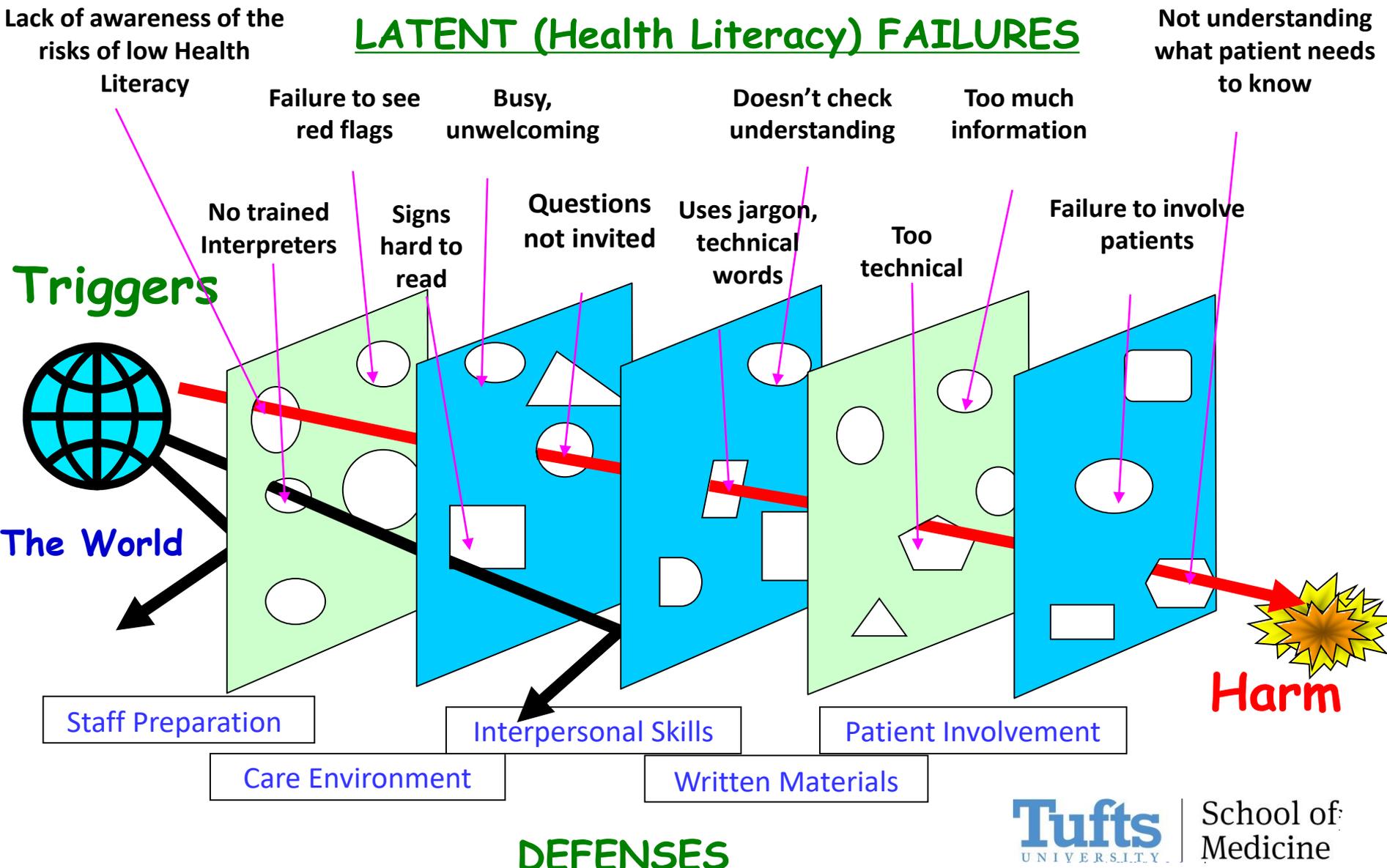
Care Environment

Written Materials

DEFENSES

Tufts
UNIVERSITY

School of
Medicine



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
- Establish health literacy bundle

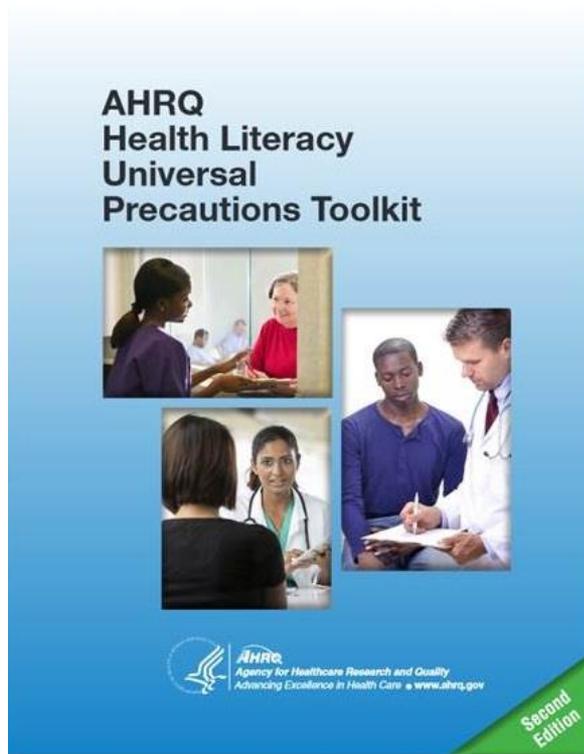


Source: Brach C, Deller D, Hernandez LM, et al. *Ten Attributes of Health Literate Health Care Organizations*. . Washington DC: National Academy of Sciences; 2012. Available at: http://iom.edu/~media/Files/Perspectives-Files/2012/Discussion-Papers/BPH_Ten_HLit_Attributes.pdf. Accessed October 16, 2012.

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.

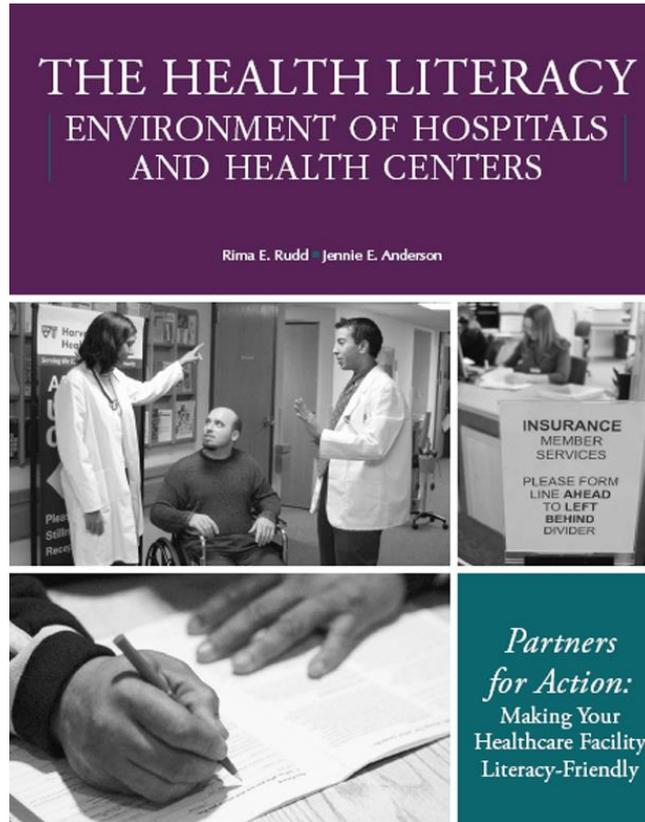
<http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/index.html>

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

Source: Rudd R and Anderson J. The Health Literacy Environment of Hospitals and Health Centers. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Boston: MA. 2006. <https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/135/2012/09/healthliteracyenvironment.pdf>

Health Literacy & Plain Language

CONTEXT:

Public Health

Health Literacy & Public Health

Health Literacy



About This Site

This site provides information and tools to improve health literacy and public health. These resources are for all organizations that interact and communicate with people about health.

[More >](#)

Learn About Health Literacy

- What Is Health Literacy?
- Understanding Health Literacy
- Understanding Literacy and Numeracy

[More >](#)

Plan And Act

- What is the National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy?
- What is the vision of the Plan?
- Organizational Attributes
- How can I use the plan?

[More >](#)

Develop Materials

- Guidance and Standards
- Plain Language
- Audiences
- Visual Communication
- Testing Messages and Materials

[More >](#)

Find Training

- Writing for the Public
- Using Numbers and Explaining Risk
- Creating Easier to Understand Lists, Charts, and Graphs
- Speaking with the Public

[More >](#)

Connect With Health Literacy

Sign up for email updates from Health Literacy and the Health Literacy BLOG.

 [Subscribe to Health Literacy](#) 

 [Subscribe to Bridging the Health Literacy Gap Blog](#) 

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/developmaterials/index.html>

Health Literacy & Plain Language

CONTEXT:

Health Insurance

Promote Health Insurance Literacy

UNITEDHEALTH GROUP® | Just Plain Clear® Glossary

HOME | CONTACT US

Thousands of health care terms defined in plain, clear language to help you make informed decisions.

SEARCH BY WORD - or - BROWSE BY LETTER

Search for a health care term... **SEARCH**

Top 5 Terms

These words have been getting the most clicks. Do you see any that you need to understand, too?

1. out-of-pocket cost

Term of the Week

immune system

Your body's cells, tissues and organs that work together to protect your body

Uniform Glossary

The Just Plain Clear® Glossary includes all the words in the Uniform Glossary established by the federal government.

 [View the Uniform Glossary](#)

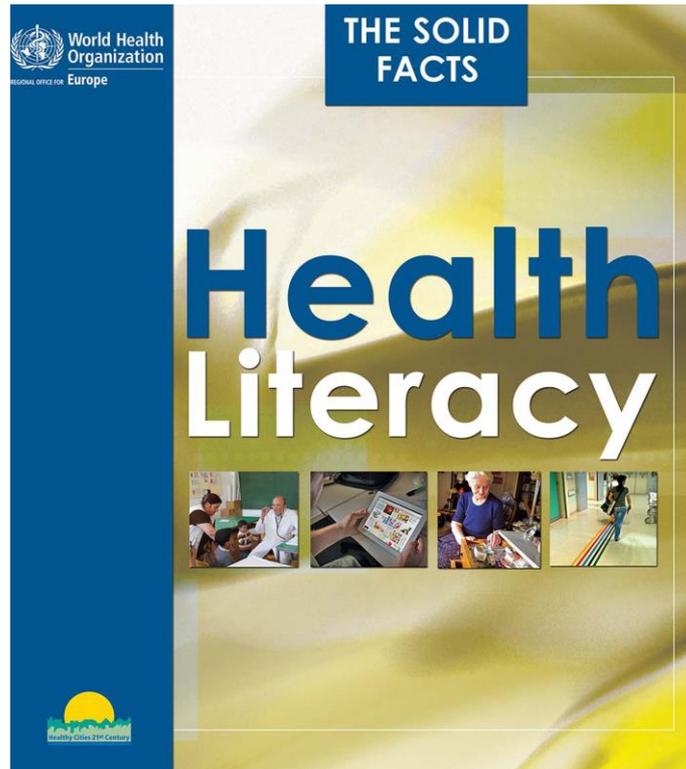
<http://www.justplainclear.com/en>

Health Literacy & Plain Language

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

Source: World Health Organization (WHO). (2013) *Health Literacy. The Solid Facts*[Online]. Available from: <http://publichealthwell.ie/node/534072> [Accessed: 20th February 2019].



IHLA

International Health Literacy Association



- 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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