Notes from the Health Sciences Library - October 13, 2021

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October is Health Literacy Awareness Month

Health literacy involves the information and services that people need to make well-informed health decisions. On a personal level, it is the ability to seek, find, understand, appraise, and use health information and services to address or solve a health problem for yourself or others. From an organizational side, it involves the degree to which health care providers equitably enable this for the people they treat. Digital literacy and numeracy also play a role. It's complex, and important. Nearly 9 out of 10 adults lack the skills to understand their health care (!) and people with low health literacy skills are more likely to have poor health outcomes, make medication errors, or mismanage chronic diseases. It's not just knowing where to go or who to ask for information, it is understanding doctor's directions, or prescription drug instructions, interpreting blood sugar levels, or navigating the complexities of the healthcare system. (from the NNLM An Introduction to Health Literacy)

As health educators, students, and practitioners, we can help improve the health literacy of our community by how we talk about health and medical information, and by taking the time to be sure those we interact with understand what we are saying. (see HRSA Health Literacy) Some of the resources below can aid in this effort.

Accessibility of information - how easy it is to get to and to understand - is also critical. Later this month, I'll share a new web guide that is in the works as a platform for freely available consumer health information.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality : Health Literacy
this rich resource offers

- a variety of health literacy improvement tools
- professional training & patient education
- guiding frameworks & models
- research tools & data

Clinical Conversations
An in-depth and free training program for clinicians and clinical staff to increase knowledge and awareness of health literacy and associated skills and tools. Seven segmented topics are covered: 1. Health Literacy 2.Cultural Humility 3. LGBTQ+ Affirming Care 4. Social Determinants of Health 5. Motivational Interviewing 6. Evidence-Based Practice 7. Shared Decision Making.

Health Literacy for Interprofessional Education (IPE) eToolkit
A broad collection of resources and tools, including many on improving patient communication: using jargon-free terms and plain language, active listening, utilizing the teach back method.

Harvard School of Public Health : Health Literacy Studies
This site includes a variety of resources for education, assessment, utilization of tools, research and data around health literacy.

Clear Communication Resources from the NIH
Information and resources on these pages are designed to support science and public health communicators in the creation and dissemination of health information toward greater health literacy.

Simply Put
A guide to help make your message clear and understandable in a medical context.

Easy-to-Read Health Information from MedlinePlus

Plain Language Medical Dictionary

Medical Terms in Lay Language

Multilingual health and medical information:

- Access Medicine: Patient Ed sheets (Adult/Pediatric/Medicines Advisor)
  there is a drop-down menu that allows for selection from nine languages on any of the hundreds of topics listed. These education sheets can also be personalized when you log into your *MyAccess* profile (this is your AccessMedicine platform log-in, if you've created an account). ASK the librarian if you want help with this!
- MedlinePlus Health Information in Multiple Languages
  explore by language or topic
- CDC Resources in Languages Other than English
- Health Information Translations
  side-by-side English/other languages information sheets about a long list of diseases and conditions in over a dozen languages
- Point-to-Talk booklets
  available in a handful of languages and free to print