Health Literacy

The key building block to Member Engagement
Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. ¹

Engagement includes the actions a person takes to achieve a health/ behavioral goal based on an informed understanding.

Health literacy skills are currently seen as a key factor that impacts peoples ability to engage in self care and chronic-disease management.
Alliance Member Engagement Paradigm

Informed Decision-Making
- Health Literacy, understanding, personal choice

Conscious Action
- Actions may not be what we would choose.

Relational Autonomy
- People have the right to choose how & with whom they engage. Engagement may be fluid.
Health Literacy:
Vastly different from traditional literacy

• Choosing a healthy lifestyle, knowing how to seek medical care, and taking advantage of preventive measures require that people understand and use health information.

• Persons with limited health literacy skills make greater use of services designed to treat complications of disease and less use of services designed to prevent complications.\(^2\), \(^3\)-\(^5\)

• Research also demonstrate a higher rate of hospitalization and use of emergency services among patients with limited health literacy skills. This higher use is associated with higher healthcare costs. \(^4\)
Health Literacy is Critical for Vulnerable Populations

• In a 2003 study, only 12 percent of U.S. adults had proficient health literacy skills.
• Over a third of U.S. adults—77 million people—would have difficulty with common health tasks, such as following directions on a prescription drug label.
• Compared to privately insured adults, both publicly insured and uninsured adults had lower health literacy skills.
• Even people with strong literacy skills can face health literacy challenges.
• All adults, regardless of their health literacy skills, were more likely to get health information from radio/television, friends/family, and health professionals than from print media.
Health Literacy: What Works

- Multi Media Videos
- Illustrated medication instructions
- Shared Decision Making Aids
- Ask Me Three
- Teach back methods
Health Literacy: Current Activities

• **Alliance Projects**
  • Modifying Alliance’s web content to insure more novel multimedia and video formats.
  • Modifying Alliance print content for increasing ‘plain English’ not just a prescribed reading level.
  • Modifying Alliance print content and patient education materials to include health literacy approaches.
  • Developing illustrated medication booklets designed to assist individuals in understanding when to take medication.
  • Developing Shared Decision Making Aids, in partnership with the Mayo Clinic. (still in process)
References


