

# Designing a Health Literacy & Multicultural Competency Website For Physicians and Other Health Professionals

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## Background Information

Librarians at the University of Cincinnati wanted to help physicians and other health professions treat low literacy patients and those with varied ethnic/cultural backgrounds.



Associated Press

## Process

Librarians decided to create a website and started collecting information in these topic areas:

- Examples of low health literacy and culturally diverse patients
- Strategies to use to help patients understand and manage their health conditions.
- Continuing Education opportunities for physicians & other health professionals.
- Patient handouts
- Organizations
- University resources including books and journals
- Research
- Useful statistics on why it is important to help patients with low health literacy and patients from a different culture.



This website provides resources for clinicians and other health care professionals at the University of Cincinnati Academic Health Center to communicate with their patients who have low health literacy or are from a different cultural or ethnic background.

Health literacy is defined by the National Library of Medicine as:

"The degree to which people can obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services they need to make appropriate health decisions."

### Remember

- "Just 12 percent of America's 228 million adults have the skills to manage their own health care proficiently" - From the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's 2007 *National Healthcare Disparities Report*
- Accomplished or highly literate patients might not understand sophisticated health information

### Identifying Low Literacy Patients

- Eyes wander when looking at written information
- Communicate frustration, impatience, or are chronically non-compliant
- Ask you to read information or takes information home to look at later

### Physician Communication Tips

- Focus on 3-5 essential points
- Keep sentences short
- Have patients repeat your instructions
- Provide dosing syringes or medication spoons for patients to use
- Mark exact dosage with a line

<http://www.uc.edu/healthliteracy/>



### Patient Handouts and Education Materials

This section includes:

- Sites with easy-to-read disease information that may be used as patient education handouts
- Interactive tutorials that may be recommended for patients to view describing tests and diagnostic procedures, surgery and treatment procedures, prevention and wellness, and diseases and conditions.

### Top Picks for Health Literacy Patient Education Handout Sources:

- Easy-to-Read Health Information  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/easystoread/easystoread.html>  
Easy-to-read materials listed alphabetically by disease or condition.
- Interactive Health Tutorials  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthtutorial.html>  
Tutorials that use animated graphics to explain a procedure or condition in easy-to-read language. You can also listen to the tutorial.
- NetWellness  
<http://www.netwellness.org>  
Consumer health information including answers to consumer questions provided by physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, dentists, genetics counselors, optometrists, athletic trainers, and social workers.

### Top Picks for Cultural Competency Patient Education Handout Sources:

- S\*P\*H\*R\*A\*L\* (Selected Patient Education Resources in Asian Languages)  
<http://www.library.hhs.edu/hlsisrael/>

## Collaboration

The Health Center Publicity Department was brought into the website design process to coordinate with other health center projects and better market the website. Several useful design suggestions came out of the process.

- On the home page have short and to the point information to help busy physicians & health professionals who don't have time to explore the entire website:

- statistics
- how health care professionals can identify patients in need
- tips on how to communicate with patients

- Under each category on the website, start with top picks. If the user wants to go into more depth, they can click on another level and get more in-depth information.

These suggestions made the site user-friendly for a quick look and see, but also contained more detailed information for those who wanted to explore topics in greater depth.

## Successful Project

With layers, users could get critical information quickly or delve deeper into extensive resources available locally or through the internet.