Contents

List of Figures, Tables, and Appendices ix
Preface xi

Part I. Health Literacy: Understanding the Issues

Chapter 1. Introduction to Health Literacy 3
   Lynda M. Baker, Marge Kars, and Feleta L. Wilson

Chapter 2. Review of the Literature 9
   Nancy Schaefer
   Definitions of Health Literacy 9
   Components of Health Literacy 11
   Special Health Literacy 12
   Characteristics Correlating to Low Health Literacy 13
   Reasons for Concern 14
   Consequences of Low Health Literacy 19
   Proposed Solutions 20
   References 28

   Charlene Pope
   Introduction 55
   The Expanding Definition 56
   Theories of Language and Their Contribution to Health Literacy 58
   Social Practice in the New Forms of Health Literacy 59
   Social Biases and Their Role in Social Practice and Health Literacy 60
   Bridges to a More Multidimensional Health Literacy Solution 61
   Solutions 63
   References 64
Part II. Health Literacy Issues in Special Populations: The Influence of Culture, Ethnicity, Special Needs, and Age on Health

Chapter 4. Cultural Competence and Health Literacy 73
  Misa Mi
  Introduction 73
  Culture and Health 74
  Cultural Competence for Healthcare Providers 75
  Barriers to Cultural Competence 76
  Models for Cultural Competence 77
  Cultural Competence for Librarians 78
  Cultural Competence Training 80
  Importance of Culture in Understanding Health Literacy 80
  Promoting Health Literacy 81
  Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Health Literacy 83
  Summary 86
  References 86

Chapter 5. Impact of Patient Low Literacy on the Individual and Family 93
  Feleta L. Wilson
  The Impact of Low Literacy on the Patient 94
  Individuals with Low Literacy Skills: Who Are They? 95
  Family Health Literacy 96
  Health Disparities Associated with Low Literacy Patients 98
  Partnerships Between Nurses and Librarians 99
  References 100

Chapter 6. The Association Between Literacy and Health: Providing Health Information to Adults with Low Literacy 103
  Heather J. Martin and C. Nadine Wathen
  Introduction 103
  What Is Health Literacy and Why Is It Important? 105
  Low Literacy and Poor Health 106
  Methods of Delivering Health Information to Individuals with Low Literacy 108
  A Role for Librarians 110
  Conclusion 112
  References 113
### Part III. Health Literacy Issues in Public and Hospital Libraries: Providing Programs and Services to Help Consumers Understand Their Healthcare

#### Chapter 10. The Health Reference Interview: Getting to the Heart of the Question While Assessing Your Customer’s Literacy Skills

*Karyn Prechtel*

- The Health Reference Interview
- Be Aware of the Person Asking the Question
- Get as Much Information as Possible
- Ask If They Have a Deadline
- Is the Question Still Not Clear?
- Follow-up
- What Not to Do
- What You Should Do
- Reference Interview and Literacy Levels
- Challenges of Telephone and E-mail Queries
- Conclusion
- References

#### Chapter 11. Public Libraries and Health Literacy

*Barbara Bibel*

- Community Assessment
- Collection Development
- Training
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Outreach
- Conclusion
- References

#### Chapter 12. Health Literacy in Canada: Highlighting Library Initiatives

*Susan Murray*

- Canadian Library Scene
- British Columbia
- Nova Scotia
- Ontario
- Quebec
- Conclusion
- References
Chapter 13. Consumer Health Services in Hospitals: The Front Line for Health Literacy

*Julie Esparza*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Health Services in Hospital Libraries Survey (CHSHL)</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Partnerships</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Collection</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packets of Information</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach Services</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships and Services</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 14. Health Literacy in Action—The Bronson Experience

*Marge Kars*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bronson Initiatives</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Bronson Health Literacy Initiatives</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Health Sciences Library Initiative</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nursing Initiative</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons Learned</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part IV. The Future: Ways to Initiate and Become Involved with Health Literacy Programs

Chapter 15. Intervention Programs for Health Literacy

*Cleo Pappas*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Is an Intervention?</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Health Literacy</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Reading Levels Correspond to Consumer Needs?</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of Poor Health Literacy</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of JCAHO</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and Informed Consent</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Librarians</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Pharmacists</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readability</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 16. Forming and Funding Collaborations to Address Health Literacy

Kristine Alpi and Dina Sherman

Identifying Existing Health Literacy Collaborations 282
Local Example: New York Health Literacy Collaborations 286
Identifying Funding for Collaborative Efforts 291
Working Successfully with Funding Agencies 293
Sustaining Collaborations in Health Literacy 294
Conclusion 294
References 294

About the Editors and Contributors 299

Index 305
List of Figures, Tables, and Appendices

FIGURES
Figure 10-1 Online Form for E-Mail Queries 193

TABLES
Table 13-1 Library and Internal Hospital Consumers 219
Table 13-2 Availability of Collection to the Public 222
Table 13-3 Packets of Information for Customers 226
Table 13-4 Outreach Services 231

APPENDIXES
Appendix 2-1 Readability Formulae 45
Appendix 2-2 Literacy Tests Used in Healthcare Settings 46
Appendix 4-1 Cultural Competence Course 91
Appendix 4-2 Course Module Sequence 92
Appendix 9-1 Initial Survey Form 175
Appendix 9-2 Initial Survey Results 176
Appendix 9-3 Final Evaluation Form 176
Appendix 9-4 Final Evaluation Results—Web Site Features 178
Appendix 9-5 Final Evaluation Results—Internet Experience Preferences 178
Appendix 11-1 A Quick Guide to Searching for Census Information 206
Appendix 11-2 Sources for Foreign Materials 207
Appendix 13-1 Consumer Health Services in Hospital Libraries Survey 241
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix 14-1</th>
<th>Original Version of the Bronson Hospital Release Assignment Form</th>
<th>252</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 14-2</td>
<td>Revised Version of the Bronson Hospital Release Assignment Form</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 15-1</td>
<td>Resources on Health Literacy for Librarians</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 16-1</td>
<td>METRO Special Interest Group on Consumer Health One-Day Conference on Health Literacy: Preconference Survey</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

Health literacy is a vital component of consumer health. The publication of the Institute of Medicine’s report *Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion* (2004), coupled with the 2003 *National Assessment of Adult Literacy* (NAAL), brought national attention to a serious problem: people with low literacy skills often cannot read or understand information about their diagnosis, medications, or appointments with their physician. They may be unable to understand the directions for preparing for a medical test, or use written information about staying healthy. These same individuals have a higher incidence of disease, risk higher use of the emergency room, have longer hospital stays with higher hospital admission rates, and suffer medication errors because they cannot read or understand a prescription label. Librarians in all types of libraries can play a major role in health literacy, helping consumers to access and better understand health information.

The idea for *The Medical Library Association Guide to Health Literacy* evolved from my own experience working in a hospital-based consumer health library providing health information to consumers, and from discussions with colleagues who work with customers, in all types of libraries, looking for understandable health information.

The Medical Library Association, the world’s preeminent educational organization for health information professionals, recognizing the important role that librarians play in providing health information, has partnered with other library organizations, on the state and national levels, to increase awareness of the seriousness of this issue and collaborate to create solutions for healthcare consumers.

In 2006, I invited two colleagues from Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan—Lynda M. Baker (Library and Information Science Program) and Feleta L. Wilson (College of Nursing)—to work with me on this book about health literacy. Lynda and Feleta were the first to publish in LIS journals studies
of the literacy levels of consumer health materials. Because the importance of health literacy transcends any particular library boundary, we decided the book should be a forum for LIS professionals involved in the health literacy movement. To provide a comprehensive overview, we recruited practitioners from all types of libraries, as well as researchers in academia, to write about health literacy from their unique perspectives. After reading this guide, librarians should be better able to understand the issues that comprise health literacy, learning how to help others become health literate and how to become change agents within their organizations.

As editors, we have tried to ensure the use of gender-neutral language throughout the book. Because we find “he/she” to be clunky, we have chosen to use either “she” or “he” as equally as possible. This book is not meant to be read from cover to cover; rather, we believe readers will select chapters relevant to their situations and interests. Therefore, instead of having one definition of health literacy located in the Preface, we have allowed authors to define health literacy as it relates to and forms the basis of their work.

The Medical Library Association Guide to Health Literacy features 16 chapters, divided into four parts. The four parts:

- cover the essential issues surrounding health literacy;
- identify often overlooked implications of the influence of culture, ethnicity, special needs, and age in health;
- highlight the nation’s best practices for public and hospital library consumer health programs and services; and,
- suggest proven ways libraries can initiate their own and partner with other organizations’ health literacy programs.

In Chapter 1 the editors provide an introduction to the issues of health literacy. The different types of health literacy are defined in Chapter 2, along with a discussion on causes, effects, and solutions. A comprehensive list of readability formulae and literacy tests used in the healthcare setting is included with this chapter.

Chapter 3 looks at the role social bias plays in health encounters and how it affects health literacy. The author discusses theories of language and their contribution to health literacy, the health encounter as a literacy event, and social biases in relation to health literacy and their effects on provider and patient behavior and institutional practices. Health literacy within the context of culture, as well as the importance of cultural competency of librarians in relation to a client’s health literacy skills is the subject of Chapter 4. An outline and sequence of activities for a course titled “Cultural Competence for Health Information Professionals,” developed by the author, is presented in this chapter.
Chapter 5 covers the impact of low literacy on the patient and the family from a nursing perspective. The author discusses characteristics of patients with low literacy, the association between low literacy and health disparities, and the need for partnership between nurses and librarians. This disturbing divide is further explored in Chapter 6, which summarizes the literature on the relationship between low literacy levels and the effects on patient care and health outcomes. The authors also discuss the role librarians can take in helping to narrow the health literacy gap.

Raising awareness of the complexities of health literacy for people with disabilities is the focus of Chapter 7. The author addresses how librarians can partner with people with disabilities and the community. She includes some personal perspectives of people with various types of disabilities about health literacy and ways libraries and librarians can help them find information.

Chapter 8 posits a new model of health literacy. The author looks at health literacy within the context of senior citizens, provides some examples of health literacy interventions both inside and outside the library. Chapter 9 describes the authors’ efforts to build a foundation of health literacy among adolescents in Philadelphia. Useful information on what worked and what does not work in their collaboration with the teens is also presented.

The health reference interview is part of the individual’s ability to obtain or access health information. This initial step in the health literacy process is the focus of Chapter 10.

Public libraries should be the major provider of consumer health information. Chapter 11 features a particularly successful collaboration between a public library and a hospital library. The author also provides a list of sources of non-English language materials for a library’s collection.

Some of the health literacy initiatives by Canadian librarians and the difficulties in finding information on the activities of librarians in the area of health literacy are addressed in Chapter 12.

The results of a study on consumer health services provided by hospital librarians are provided in Chapter 13; this chapter also highlights what other hospital libraries have done to address health literacy. The partnering of hospital librarians with other hospital departments to provide consumer health services is described in Chapter 14, where the author also offers an in-depth look some of the health literacy initiatives that are taking place at one teaching hospital.

The numerous intervention programs for professionals engaged in health literacy efforts are presented in Chapter 15.

Examples of health literacy collaborations are provided in Chapter 16, including examples from New York City. The authors also discuss how to find funding support for health literacy initiatives.
I would like to thank my co-editors, Lynda and Feleta, and each of the authors who agreed to contribute to *The Medical Library Association Guide to Health Literacy*. We hope this guide will both inform and inspire our colleagues in all types of libraries to help their communities live longer and healthier lives.

Marge Kars

REFERENCES


Quick Guide to Health Literacy. Fact Sheet. Health Literacy Basics. 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. Health literacy is dependent on individual and systemic factors: Communication skills of lay persons and professionals. Health literacy is linked to literacy and entails people’s knowledge, motivation and competences to access, understand, appraise and apply health information in order to make judgements and take decisions in every-day life concerning health care, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain or improve quality of life during the life course. Many conceptual approaches to health literacy have been developed during the past decade. This publication follows the conceptual model developed by the European Health Literacy Consortium for the European Health Literacy Survey (Fig. The Medical Library Association’s Scholarly Communications Committee has gathered recent slide decks on scholarly communications topics prepared by health sciences librarians. MLA Comments on Healthy People 2030 Objectives. Fri January 18, 2019. MLA comments on Healthy People 2030. Upcoming Webinars. Applying the ACRL Information Literacy Framework to Your Teaching. Thu December 12, 2019. Teaching gamification principles for library instruction to health sciences information professionals using interactive, low-tech activities and design-thinking modalities. Posted on: October 3, 2019 - 09:26 AM. From enhanced collaborations to space advancements: technologies to bring libraries (and librarians) full circle and into the future.