National Activities on Oral Health Literacy
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Oral Health Literacy Workshop
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Legislation

- **Affordable Care Act (2010)**
  - Plain language Summary of Coverage and Benefits
  - Patient and insurance navigators
  - Oral Healthcare Prevention Education Campaign

- **Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (2009)**
  - Meaningful use

- **Plain Writing Act (2010)**
  - NIH and CDC have Clear Communication Initiatives
National Action Plan
to Improve
Health Literacy
HHS National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy (2010)

Seven Goals

- Health information creation and dissemination
- Health care services
- Early childhood through university education
- Community-based services
- Partnership and collaboration
- Research and evaluation
- Dissemination of evidence-based practice

- **Health outcomes**
  - Taking medications appropriately
  - Interpreting labels and health messages
  - Seniors’ health status and quality of life
  - Mortality

- **Health services**
  - Hospitalization
  - Emergency care visit
  - Flu immunization

- **Knowledge and comprehension**


- Limited health literacy part of the challenge
- Improving health literacy part of community-based solutions
- Health literacy improvement must begin at least by school age
National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health (2003)

- **Action 1:** Change perceptions of oral health
  - Enhance oral health literacy

- **Action 2:** Overcome barriers by replicating effective programs and proven efforts
  - Enhance health promotion and health literacy

- **Action 4:** Increase oral health workforce diversity, capacity and flexibility
  - Provide training in communication skills and cultural competence to health care providers and students

- Provides framework for understanding oral health, health literacy, and points of intervention
- States evidence from medicine and public health and indicates oral health has similar problems
- Calls for more research
- Provides guiding questions

Healthy People

2010 Oral Health Focus Area: Explicit statement

To promote oral health and prevent oral disease, oral health literacy among all groups is necessary.

2020 Oral Health Topic Area: Where is health literacy?

Discusses “awareness” and “acceptance” of oral health measures.

Background statement: A person’s ability to access oral health care is associated with factors such as education level, income, race and ethnicity.
“Nearly all aspects of oral health care require literacy.” (pg. 51)

“The organization of the health system can also enhance or inhibit health literacy.” (pg. 53)

“Individual practitioners, health organizations, and HHS can all take actions to mitigate the effects of low health literacy.” (pg. 53)
All relevant HHS agencies should undertake oral health literacy and education efforts aimed at individuals, communities, and health care professionals.

- Community-wide public education on oral diseases and preventive interventions
- Community-wide guidance on how to access oral health care
- Professional education on patient–provider communication skills
Oral Health Literacy
Foundational Documents

2000
Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General

2003
A National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health

2009
National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy

2010
Promoting and Enhancing the Oral Health of the Public

2010
ORAL HEALTH INITIATIVE 2010

2011
BHS Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities

2011
A Nation Free of Disparities in Health and Health Care

Enhancing Oral Health in America
NIH Oral Health and Health Literacy Research (2004-2012)

- NIH-wide program announcement
- NIDCR has funded $15.5 million
- Examples: Funded research projects
  - Examination of oral health literacy in public health practice
  - Health literacy and oral health knowledge
  - Latinos’ health literacy, social support, and oral health knowledge and behaviors
  - Development of an oral health literacy instrument
  - Use of videogames to promote oral health knowledge
  - Health literacy and oral health status of African refugees
HHS Oral Health Initiative

Office of Minority Health
- A cultural competency e-learning continuing education program for oral health professionals

Office on Women’s Health
- Oral health as part of women’s health across the lifespan

http://www.hrsa.gov/publichealth/clinical/oralhealth/hhsinitiative.pdf
Health Education Materials

NIDCR
- Easy-to-read oral health education brochures
- Currently developing video version of several brochures to reach people with limited literacy skills

CDC
- Tested messages/graphics used to develop the “Brush Up on Healthy Teeth” fluoride education materials for parents of young children.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
- text4Baby
- National Children’s Health Coverage Campaign
Other Activities and Resources

q Health Literacy Plans

β CDC Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy
β AHRQ Health Literacy Action Plan

q Training and Education

β Clear Communication: NIH Health Literacy Initiative
   • http://www.nih.gov/clearcommunication/healthliteracy.htm
β CDC Health Literacy Portal
   • http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy
β HRSA Training for Health Care Professionals
   • http://www.hrsa.gov/publichealth/healthliteracy/index.html

q Resources

β IHS Health Literacy Tools and Resources
   • http://www.ihs.gov/healthcommunications/index.cfm?module=dsp_hc_health_lit
   eracy
β CMS Health Literacy Toolkit
   • http://www.cms.gov/WrittenMaterialsToolkit/
The Way Forward

- Assure a more competent workforce
  - Train clinicians in communication skills/cultural competency
  - Have staff complete CDC/HRSA courses in health literacy
- Use plain language in publications and websites
  - Oral health care prevention and education, special populations, access to care, coverage
- Assist patients with disease self-management
- Assess and improve user friendliness of our clinics
- Utilize guidance, resources and tools
  - Action steps are outlined and resources available for health professionals to make health information and services accurate, accessible, and actionable.
- Foster and enhance collaboration (internal and external)
Thank you!

For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.