Message from the Chair
Bernard M. Rosof

Throughout the health care system there is increasing acknowledgment that health literacy is a key component to equitable, patient-centered, high-quality care. There is also a growing realization that health literacy is an important factor in efforts to improve the health of the public.

The Roundtable on Health Literacy continues to develop activities designed to inspire, inform, and activate a wide variety of stakeholders to develop and implement evidence-based health literacy practices and policies with the goal of improving the health and well-being of all people. We began 2015 with the January publication of a commissioned paper that describes strategies and a model for engaging consumers in getting and using health insurance. Then, in March, we explored consumer-facing technology in a workshop that focused on health literate approaches. Also in March the National Academies Press (NAP) released the report of a roundtable workshop, Informed Consent and Health Literacy: Workshop Summary. In July the Roundtable held a workshop focused on the importance of health literacy to palliative care. A discussion paper published in July by the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) explored how health literacy is a necessary element for achieving health equity. In August the report Health Literacy: Past, Present, and Future: Workshop Summary was released by NAP and in October the summary of the workshop on consumer-facing technology was released. A workshop on integrating health literacy, cultural competency, and language access services was held October 19 and in December a discussion paper, Health Literacy and Palliative Care: What Really Happens to Patients, was published by the NAM. More information on these activities can be found in the body of this annual report. Videos of all the Roundtable workshops and copies of these reports and papers can be found on the Roundtable website at http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Activities/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy.aspx.

The year 2016 promises to be another exciting and productive year. A major activity of the Roundtable will be to engage in new efforts to reach out to people in the field to find out their health literacy interests and issues of concern. The Roundtable will use the information gathered to inform the Roundtable members as they engage in strategic planning in May. Another effort is a project aimed at fostering the development of quality performance measures focused on integration of three areas—health literacy, cultural competency, and language access services. A project focused on developing new approaches to
evaluating the impact of the Roundtable activities and publications will be undertaken. We will hold three workshops in 2016—the relevance of health literacy to precision medicine (March 2), health literacy and health reform (July 21), and clarity of communication as a foundational aspect in shared decision making for medications (November 17). In addition, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality awarded us a grant to commission a paper that will explore what it will take to ensure widespread use in primary care of an effective after-visit summary as a tool for patient education and engagement.

The future holds exciting challenges for health literacy. Precision medicine brings new possibilities for treatment and health. Yet for precision medicine to succeed, health literate communication with the public, individual patients, providers, and researchers is critical. With the enrollment in health insurance of millions of previously uninsured individuals, health literate communication about how to use medical care services effectively is crucial. Exploration of the relevance of health literacy to public and population health is a key area to pursue. While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done for the Roundtable and the field of health literacy as a whole. We look forward to working with all of you to address these and other challenges.

Bernard M. Rosof, MD, MACP
Chair
Roundtable Activities in 2015

Workshops and Meetings

**Consumer-Facing Technology (Washington, DC, March 24, 2015)**
The workshop opened with a presentation by Ted Vickey, President of FitWell LLC, titled “Consumer-Facing Technology: What Is It and What Are the Issues?” This was followed by three panels. The first discussed health literate digital design and strategies with reactions provided by Dean Hovey of Digifit, one of the inventors of the mouse; Lana Moriarty from the Office of the National Coordinator; and Catina O’Leary from Health Literacy Missouri. The second panel addressed issues related to catalyzing widespread informed consumer engagement in the use of digital technologies. The final panel included presentations related to the use of consumer-facing technology by select populations. The report of this workshop can be found on the Roundtable website at http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2015/Health-Literacy-and-Consumer-Facing-Technology.aspx.

**Health Literacy and Palliative Care (Washington, D.C., July 9, 2015)**
Palliative care provides a specialized, holistic approach to providing medical care for people with very serious illnesses. The focus of palliative care is on providing relief from symptoms and improving quality of life for patients. The keynote presentation called for integrating palliative care principles and practices across the entire health care spectrum for those with a serious illness. The workshop’s first panel explored the role of interpersonal communication in determining how patient’s experience palliative care. The second panel focused on the need to train health care professionals to have health literate discussions about palliative care. The third panel featured different perspectives on palliative care: the family care giver, the social worker, nursing, and integrating
spiritual care. The report will be published in early 2016 and can be accessed through the Roundtable website at http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Activities/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy.aspx.

**Integrated Health Literacy, Cultural Competency, and Language Access Services (Irvine, CA, October 19, 2015)**

In their drive to adequately serve increasingly diverse communities, health care organizations are searching for approaches that will enable them to provide information and service to all persons—regardless of age, race, cultural background, or language skills—in a manner that facilitates understanding and the use of that information to make appropriate health decisions. This workshop explored how the dynamic forces operating in health care today impact the delivery of services in a way that is health literate, culturally competent, and in an appropriate language for patients and their

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**Roundtable Activities in 2015**

- March 17
  Workshop—Health Literacy, eHealth, and Communication: Putting the Consumer First

- April 22
  Publication—Standardizing Medication Labels: Confusing Patients Less: Workshop Summary

- May 12
  Workshop—Toward Health Equity and Patient-Centeredness: Integrating Health Literacy, Disparities Reduction, and Quality Improvement
families. The keynote presentation focused on the opportunities created by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and other incentives for system transformation that support the integration of health literacy, cultural competency, and language access services. The first panel addressed two questions: What are the key concepts in each of the three areas and what has changed over time that facilitates integration? The second panel included an overview presentation on the issues and challenges for integrating health literacy, cultural competency, and language access services, which was followed by a moderated discussion of issues and challenges for integration. The concluding panel provided four examples of programs aimed at integrating health literacy, cultural competency, and language access services. Workshop participants then divided into three groups to discuss approaches to integration in policy, research, and care delivery. The summary of this workshop will be published in mid-2016 and can be accessed through the roundtable website at http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Activities/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy.aspx.

**Reports and Papers**

**Successfully Engaging Hard-to-Reach Populations in Health Insurance: A Focus on Outreach, Sign Up, and Use** *(Commissioned Paper, January 2015)*

Perhaps none of the provisions of the ACA have received as much attention or as fierce a debate as the provisions related to increasing access through the provision of health insurance. Despite exceeding goals for enrollment in health insurance under the ACA, many state health insurance exchanges encountered difficulties in achieving their enrollment goals for particular populations, for example, African Americans, Asian and Pacific Islanders, and Latinos.
Blue Shield Foundation of California funded the Roundtable Collaborative on Health Literacy and Access, Health Care Coverage, and Care to commission a paper focusing on successful strategies for enrolling these populations in health insurance. The authors conducted interviews of organizations and individuals that were successful in enrolling hard-to-reach populations in health insurance through the health exchanges. The paper describes successful strategies, develops a model for engaging consumers in getting and using health insurance, makes recommendations about the focus of future efforts, and discusses the implications of report findings. The paper is available on the Roundtable website at http://iom.nationalacademies.org/~/media/Files/Activity%20Files/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy/Commissioned-Papers/Engaging_Consumers_Insurance.pdf?la=en.

**Why We Need a Health Literacy Association** *(Discussion Paper, Released February 4, 2015)*

The authors of this paper believe that in order to flourish as an independent field of research and practice, health literacy needs an inclusive professional association. The creation of an international, multidisciplinary, peer organization has the potential to enhance the careers of health literacy researchers and practitioners as well as nurture the field’s future by providing a global resource for educational and professional development. The paper is available at http://nam.edu/perspectives-2015-why-we-need-a-health-literacy-association.
Informed Consent and Health Literacy: Workshop Summary
(Released March 16, 2015)

Regulations that govern the attainment of informed consent for treatment and research are crucial to ensuring that medical care and research are conducted in an ethical manner and with the utmost respect for individual preferences and dignity. These regulations, however, often require or are perceived to require that informed consent documents and related materials contain language beyond the comprehension level of most patients and study participants. This report is the summary of a workshop that explored actions that could be taken to help close the gap between what is required in the informed consent process and communicating it in a health literate and meaningful manner to individuals. The workshop began with the presentation of a commissioned paper, *Best Practices and New Models of Health Literacy for Informed Consent: Review of the Impact of Informed Consent Regulations on Health Literate Communications*. The following presentations addressed the ethical imperative to gain informed consent from patients and research participants, a review of the current state and best practices for informed consent in research and treatment, the connection between poor informed consent processes and minority underrepresentation in research, new approaches to informed consent that reflect the principles of health literacy, and the future of informed consent in treatment and research settings. The workshop summary is available at http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2015/Informed-Consent-Health-Literacy.aspx.
Health Literacy: A Necessary Element for Achieving Health Equity *(Discussion Paper, Released July 24, 2015)*

A core aim for improving health care is to provide equitable care. An essential ingredient in the effort to increase health equity and reduce health disparities is eliminating health literacy barriers. In this paper the authors describe how health literacy, health equity, and health disparities are connected, both in practice and in research. The examples presented demonstrate that interventions using principles of health literacy, applied in community-based settings, can result in improved outcomes at the population level. The authors conclude that confronting issues of health literacy in the United States is a critical feature of addressing disparities. They write that interventions in nonclinical settings should increase as health literacy becomes more integral to community-based interventions to promote health equity. The paper is available at http://nam.edu/perspectives-2015-health-literacy-a-necessary-element-for-achieving-health-equity.

Health Literacy: Past, Present, and Future: Workshop Summary *(Released August 11, 2015)*

In 2004, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released *Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion*, a landmark report on the then-underappreciated challenge of “enabling patients to comprehend their condition and treatment, to make the best decisions for their care, and to take the right medications at the right time in the intended dose.” The committee stated the importance of health and it laid out a comprehensive strategy to improve health literacy in America. To commemorate the anniversary of
the release, a workshop was held in November 2014. This workshop summary report includes presentations assessing the progress made in the field of health literacy during the past decade, exploring the current state of the field, and envisioning the future of health literacy at the local, national, and international levels. The workshop summary is available at http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2015/Health-Literacy-Past-Present-Future.aspx.

Health Literacy and Consumer-Facing Technology: Workshop Summary (Released October 28, 2015)

The proliferation of consumer-facing technology and personal health information technology has grown steadily over the past decade. Many people have embraced smartphones and wearable health monitoring devices to track their fitness and personal health information. Providers have made it easier for patients and caregivers to access health records and communicate through online patient portals. However, the large volume of health-related information that these devices can generate and input into a health record can also lead to an increased amount of confusion on the part of users and caregivers. This report is a summary of a workshop that began with a presentation providing an overview of consumer-facing technology and the issues involved in creating, deploying, and adopting such technologies. Panels explored the topics of health literacy digital design and strategies, approaches to catalyzing consumer and health care professional engagement in the use of such technologies, and efforts under way to use

**Health Literacy and Palliative Care: What Really Happens to Patients**  
*Discussion Paper, Released December 3, 2015*

The authors explore how the health literacy problem in our health system resides within the health care system. The system’s inability to find out, understand, and respond to what matters most to patients and their families is illustrated in the paper in Bev’s moving and infuriating story of her husband’s experience after a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in upstate New York. Joe Alves’ diagnosis of inoperable metastatic cancer brought the couple into a world with which they were not familiar and had little time or energy to learn to navigate. The saddest thing about Bev and Joe’s story is how typical it is. The authors offer this commentary to point to the system changes that are needed. The paper is available at http://nam.edu/perspectives-2015-health-literacy-and-palliative-care-what-really-happens-to-patients.
Future Activities

Three workshops are planned for 2016. The first workshop will be held March 2 and will address the relevance of health literacy to precision medicine. Planned panels include exploration of health literacy approaches to communicating about precision medicine in research, clinical encounters, and with the public. The second workshop is scheduled for July 21 and will focus on health reform and health literacy. The third workshop will be held November 17 and address the clarity of communication as a foundational aspect in shared decision making for medications. All workshops will be held in Washington, DC.

The Roundtable received funding from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to commission a paper that addresses implementing after-visit summaries in primary care settings. The paper will:

- Identify primary care models where after-visit summaries have been effectively integrated into the care of the patient.
- Identify factors key to integration in these models.
- Describe mechanisms used to engage physicians in the use of after-visit summaries in these models.
• To the extent that information is available, discuss what is known about how patients use the after-visit summaries in these models.

• Identify barriers to implementation of after-visit summaries in different kinds of primary care practices (e.g., federally qualified health centers, hospital-affiliated outpatient clinics, private practice settings, outpatient clinics of large health systems).

• Make recommendations for what is needed to overcome these barriers

The Action Collaborative on Health Literacy: A Potential Pathway to Connecting Oral Health with General Health will commission an environmental scan of existing programs integrating oral and general health. The paper will also discuss the relevance of health literacy to making such programs more patient centered.
Roundtable Members

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Sept. 10
Publication—Implications of Health Literacy for Public Health: Workshop Summary

Dec. 8
Publication—Facilitating Patient Understanding of Discharge Instructions: Workshop Summary

April 16
Publication—Informed Consent and Health Literacy: Workshop Summary

Nov. 6
Workshop—Health Literacy: Past, Present, and Future
Roundtable Sponsors

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Bristol-Myers Squibb
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Health Literacy Partners
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About the Roundtable
The Roundtable on Health Literacy brings together leaders from academia, industry, government, foundations, and associations, and representatives of patient and consumer interests who have an interest and role in improving health literacy. The Roundtable envisions a society in which the demands of the health and health care systems are respectful of and aligned with people’s skills, abilities, and values. The mission of the Roundtable is to inspire, inform, and activate a wide variety of stakeholders. Roundtable activities support the development, implementation, and sharing of evidence-based health literacy practices and policies with the goal of improving the health and well-being of all people.

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