Message from the Chair

George Isham

This past year has been an exciting one for health literacy and for the Roundtable. Recognition is growing that health literacy is a foundational element for patient-centered, high-quality health care and public health services. In a 2012 article in Health Affairs, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Health, Dr. Howard Koh, and his co-authors wrote that health literacy is now at a tipping point, that is, “poised to make the transition from the margins to the mainstream.” Furthermore, understanding has evolved to the point where we now know that health literacy is not just a function of individual skills and abilities—it also includes the demands and complexities of the systems with which individuals interact.

In support of efforts to reduce the complex demands of health systems, members of the Roundtable’s Collaborative on Attributes and Implementation prepared a discussion paper titled “Ten Attributes of Health Literate Health Care Organizations” (see graphic). A workshop summary focusing on those attributes was also published. And in 2013 a workshop will be held to identify the challenges and facilitating factors in implementing the attributes.

Another exciting development for the Roundtable is the new emphasis on international health literacy activities. In September 2012, the Roundtable held a workshop in New York City called Health Literacy: Improving Health, Health Systems, and Health Policy Around the World, with speakers from across the globe. We hope that the workshop will serve to initiate a widespread global dialogue among organizations and individuals about the importance of and possibilities for health literacy efforts at many levels. Two exciting new efforts included broadcasting the workshop via the Web (more than 400 people from 10 countries participated) and videotaping the workshop.

The future holds new challenges for health literacy and the Roundtable. We are moving into discussions of health literacy and mHealth, health literacy and public health, and translating what we know from health literacy research into practice. While much remains to be accomplished, we can look back on 2012 as the “tipping point” for opening up new avenues of exploration, discussion, and achievements for health literacy.

George Isham
Chair
This graphic reflects the views of the authors of the Discussion Paper “Ten Attributes of Health Literate Health Care Organizations” and not necessarily of the authors’ organizations or of the IOM. The paper has not been subjected to the review procedures of the IOM and is not a report of the IOM or of the National Research Council.
Roundtable Activities in 2012

Workshops and Meetings

Oral Health Literacy Workshop (March 2012)
It has been established that limited health literacy is associated with inaccurate knowledge about preventive measures such as water fluoridation, dental care visits, dental caries severity, and oral health–related quality of life. Furthermore, the public and health care providers are largely unaware of the basic risk factors and preventive regimens for many oral diseases. The relationship between good oral health and overall health and well-being is also not well understood. Oral disease is expensive in terms of teeth, time, and money and results in pain, disfigurement, loss of school and work days, and even death when left untreated. There are profound disparities in oral health, with morbidity concentrated among the most vulnerable: those who are poor, those with a limited level of education, racial and ethnic minorities, and the elderly. These are essentially the same individuals who have low levels of health literacy.
A workshop on oral health literacy was held March 29 in Washington, DC. Congressman Elijah Cummings of Maryland presented the keynote address on the importance of oral health literacy. Panel 1 provided background on the issue of oral health and the role of health literacy in addressing oral health problems. Panel 2 examined how oral health literacy can be assessed within care systems and within the environment. Panel 3 summarized the experience of several oral health literacy programs. Panel 4 described three state-based oral health initiatives. Panel 5 provided an overview of national activities in oral health literacy. The workshop will be summarized in the publication *Oral Health Literacy: Workshop Summary* (to be published in early 2013).

**Health Literacy: Improving Health, Health Systems, and Health Policy Around the World (September 2012)**

This workshop, which highlighted health literacy policies and approaches from around the world, was held in New York City at the New York Academy of Medicine. The workshop included presentations by the president of the New York Academy of Medicine, a representative of the United Nations Secretary General’s
Office, the executive director of the World Health Organization’s New York office, and health literacy experts from many different countries. The meeting was broadcast via webinar, with more than 400 individuals from 10 countries participating. The webcast is available at www.iom.edu/worldhealthlitwebinar. A commissioned paper on international health literacy activities was prepared and distributed at the meeting. The workshop will be summarized in the publication *Health Literacy: Improving Health, Health Systems, and Health Policy Around the World: Workshop Summary* (forthcoming, 2013).

**Strategic Planning (August 2012)**

The Roundtable members met to develop the agenda for 2013 activities. Strategic planning workgroups, composed of Roundtable members, developed objectives and activities and presented their plans to the full Roundtable membership. Following discussion, the members identified several activities to be undertaken in 2013, including three workshops, development of commissioned papers and discussion papers, and preparation of PowerPoint presentations for use by members and others.
Reports and Papers

Visit the Roundtable’s website at www.iom.edu/HealthLiteracyRoundtable to access the full text of the 2012 reports and papers.

**Facilitating State Health Exchange Communication Through the Use of Health Literate Practices: Workshop Summary (February 2012)**

This is the report of a workshop held on July 19, 2011. The report provides an overview of health insurance exchanges with views on their creation and optimal operation. It also presents evidence on the extent to which consumers understand underlying health insurance concepts, describes the relevancy of health literacy to health insurance reform, and explores how health literacy interventions can facilitate the implementation of those reforms. The report offers a review of best practices in developing materials and communicating with consumers and concludes with reflections on the important points of the workshop.

**“Ten Attributes of Health Literate Health Care Organizations” (Discussion Paper, June 2012)**

Participants of the Roundtable Collaborative on Attributes and Implementation prepared this discussion paper, which is a reanalysis and revision of information contained in a commissioned paper presented at a November 2011 workshop. The discussion paper collapsed the initially proposed 18 attributes into 10 and provided supporting data and evidence for each.

This is a report summarizing presentations at the workshop held on November 16, 2011. Most health literacy research has focused on patient skills and abilities and on interventions designed to improve those skills and abilities. However, with the recognition that health literacy also depends on the demands and complexities of the health care system, it is of primary importance to develop strategies health care organizations can use to improve their health literacy. The report summarizes the commissioned paper on this topic and describes reactions to the paper from providers from different health care settings.


Released at the 2012 international health literacy workshop, this paper was commissioned by the Roundtable to identify and describe health literacy activities around the world. The paper is based on a survey conducted by Dr. Andrew Pleasant, director of health literacy and research at the Canyon Ranch Institute in Arizona. Although it is not an exhaustive sample of respondents, nor fully representative of all international health literacy efforts, the paper represents the most extensive documentation to date of health literacy efforts around the world. The Roundtable hopes the paper will serve as a functional baseline for future efforts to better understand how health literacy is advancing around the world. A companion paper is planned that will focus on health literacy efforts in the United States.
Future Activities

Three workshops are planned for 2013. First, a workshop on implementing health literacy activities will be held on April 11. The workshop will feature invited presentations from and discussions with health literacy implementers, i.e., people whose job it is to integrate health literacy policy and practice in health care systems and to make their organizations more health literate. Second, a workshop focusing on health literacy and access, health care coverage, and care is scheduled for July 18. Third, a workshop focusing on health literacy activities in public health is scheduled for November 14.

Roundtable collaboratives will continue to meet via conference calls during the year to develop objectives and activities for additional Roundtable efforts. The eight collaboratives will focus on

1. health care change;
2. implementation of the attributes of a health literacy organization;
3. international health literacy;
4. new technologies;
5. public health;
6. revisiting the 2004 IOM report *Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion*;
7. translational science; and
8. engaging with the IOM Roundtable on the Promotion of Health Equity and the Elimination of Health Disparities.
Roundtable Members

George J. Isham (Chair)
HealthPartners Foundation

Wilma Alvarado-Little
University of Albany, State University of New York

Cindy Brach
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Darren A. DeWalt
University of North Carolina Medical School

Benard P. Dreyer
New York University Langone Medical Center

Leonard G. Epstein
Health Resources and Services Administration

Laurie Francis
Oregon Primary Care Association

Deborah Fritz
GlaxoSmithKline

Martha Gragg
Missouri Foundation

Jill Griffiths
Aetna

Linda Harris
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Betsy L. Humphreys
National Library of Medicine

Joan Kelly
Humana, Inc.

Margaret Loveland
Merck & Co., Inc.

Patrick B. McGarry
American Academy of Family Physicians

Ruth Parker
Emory University School of Medicine

Kavita Patel
The Brookings Institution

Clarence E. Pearson
Global Health Leadership and Management Consultant

Susan Pisano
America’s Health Insurance Plans

Andrew Pleasant
Canyon Ranch Institute

Scott C. Ratzan
Johnson & Johnson

Will Ross
Washington University School of Medicine

Rima Rudd
Harvard School of Public Health

Steven Rush
UnitedHealth Group

Paul M. Schyve
The Joint Commission

Patrick Wayte
American Heart Association

Winston F. Wong
Kaiser Permanente

Nov. 1
Publication—Promoting Health Literacy to Encourage Prevention and Wellness: Workshop Summary

Nov. 14
Publication—Improving Health Literacy Within a State: Workshop Summary

Nov. 16
Workshop—Attributes of a Health Literate Organization

Nov. 16
Workshop—Oral Health Literacy

March 29
Workshop—Facilitating State Health Exchange Communication Through the Use of Health Literate Practices: Workshop Summary
Roundtable Sponsors

Aetna
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
American College of Physicians Foundation
America's Health Insurance Plans
GlaxoSmithKline
Health Resources and Services Administration
Humana
Johnson & Johnson
Kaiser Permanente
Merck & Co., Inc.
Missouri Foundation for Health
Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
UnitedHealth Group

Sept. 24
Workshop—Improving Health, Health Systems, and Health Policy Around the World

July 18
Publication—How Can Health Care Organizations Become More Health Literate?: Workshop Summary
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 work to improve health literacy. To achieve its mission, the Roundtable discusses challenges facing health literacy practice and research, and identifies approaches to promote health literacy through mechanisms and partnerships in both the public and private sectors.

About the Institute of Medicine
The Institute of Medicine was established in 1970 by the National Academy of Sciences to secure the services of eminent members of appropriate professions in the examination of policy matters pertaining to the health of the public. The Institute acts under the responsibility assigned to the National Academy of Sciences by its congressional charter to serve as an adviser to the federal government and, upon its own initiative, to identify issues needing attention in the areas of medical care, research, and education.

Roundtable Staff
Lyla M. Hernandez
Roundtable Director
Andrew Lemereise
Research Associate
Angela Martin
Program Associate
Rose Marie Martinez
Director, Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice