

Seminar & Discussion: Health Literacy & Policy

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Partners and Colleagues:

Maureen Johnson - Melbourne

Robert Adams - Adelaide

Karen Luxford - Sydney

Members of the Kulin Nations, whose land I visit

Literacy

Core components

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening
- Calculating [math, math concepts]

Development

- Schooling
 - K-4 Learn to read
 - 4-> Read to learn
 - The non-formal lessons
- Work

Literacy in Industrialized Societies



Literacy influences one's ability to access information and to navigate the highly literate environments of modern society

Literacy, Power, & Social Justice

Literacy

- Socially determined
- A social determinant

Social Meaning

- Identity
- Dignity
- Inclusion & participation
 - Civic
 - Economic
 - Cultural
 - Intellectual

International Assessments

IALS 1992-6

22 industrialized nations

ALLS 2003-6

2003

2006

Bermuda

Australia

Canada

Hungary

Italy

Netherlands

Mexico

New Zealand

Norway

South Korea

Switzerland

Findings

Significant numbers of adults in most industrialized nations have low-level literacy skills that constrain their participation in the economy and in society.

International Findings: Adult Literacy & Lifeskills Survey 2003

Australian Adults

A majority of Australian adults have difficulty using commonly available materials to accomplish everyday tasks

- Use a bus schedule
- Calculate a discount
- Determine correct dosage for a medicine
- Determine the point of view in an editorial

Australian Adults

- 53% [7 million] have low/limited literacy skills
- 36% [5.4 million] have sufficient literacy skills for participation in today's labor market
- 18% [2.7] have proficient literacy skills

Example: Limited Literacy Skills

- What does it mean?
 - If you struggle with the material, you may tire and feel frustrated
 - If you are under pressure, you may take short cuts [and make errors]
 - If you focus on the word, you may miss the meaning in the sentence

For example,

A Brief Experience

Please follow the directions [quickly please]:

Ecalp ruoy tfel dnah no ruoy thgir redluohs.
Neht esiar ruoy thgir mra. Fi uoy era
rednu eht ega fo ytrof elggiw eht sregnif
fo ruoy thgir dnah.

Please Read the Message

A decnalab gnitae nalp dna raluger lacisyhp
ytivitca era eht gnidliub skolb fo doog htlaeh.
Roop gnitae stibah dna lacisyhp ytivitcani yam
dael ot thgiewrevo dna detaler htlaeh smelborp.
Yb gntae thgir dna gnieb evitca, uoy yam hcaer
ro niatniam a yhtlaeh thgiew. Uoy yam osla
evorpmi ruoy lacisyhp htlaeh, latnem gnieb-llew,
dna tes na elpmaxe rof srehto. Od ti rof flesruoy
dna ruoy ylimaf!

Message:

- A balanced eating plan and regular physical activity are the building blocks of good health. Poor eating habits and physical inactivity may lead to overweight and related health problems. By eating right and being active, you may reach or maintain a healthy weight. You may also improve your physical health, mental well-being, and set an example for others. Do it for yourself and your family!

Health Literacy

Literacy Skills in the Health Context

- A new field of inquiry
- Starting point
 - Publication and dissemination of findings: Literacy skills of adults
 - Initial Research
Question: **What are the implications for health?**
- Health promotion
- Health protection
- Disease prevention
- Health care & disease management
- System navigation

Research Studies: Health Outcomes

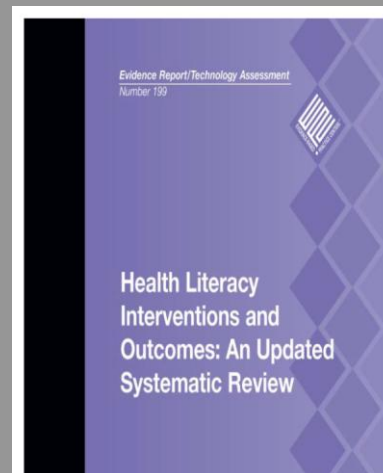
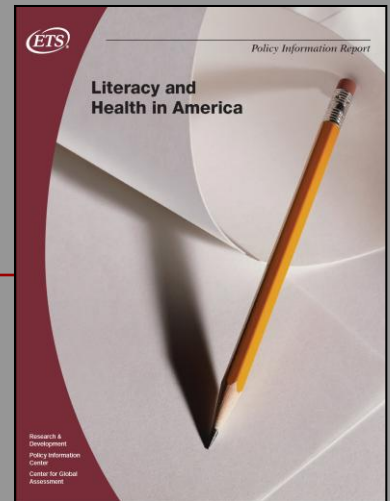
Key Finding: Patients with limited reading skills have poorer health outcomes

- Less likely to engage in screening & preventive action
- Less likely to have chronic disease under control
- More likely to be hospitalized
- More likely to report poor health
- More likely to die earlier

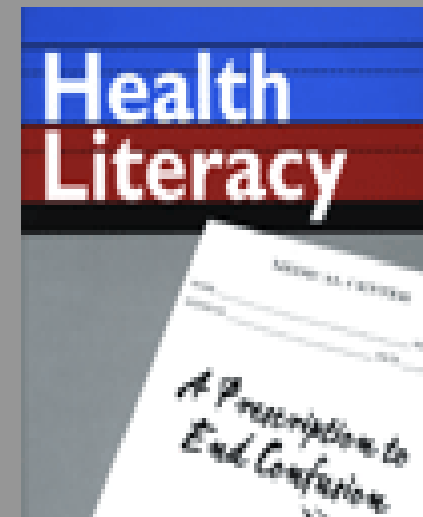
Conclusion: Significant differences in health outcomes based on patients' reading skills

Rigor

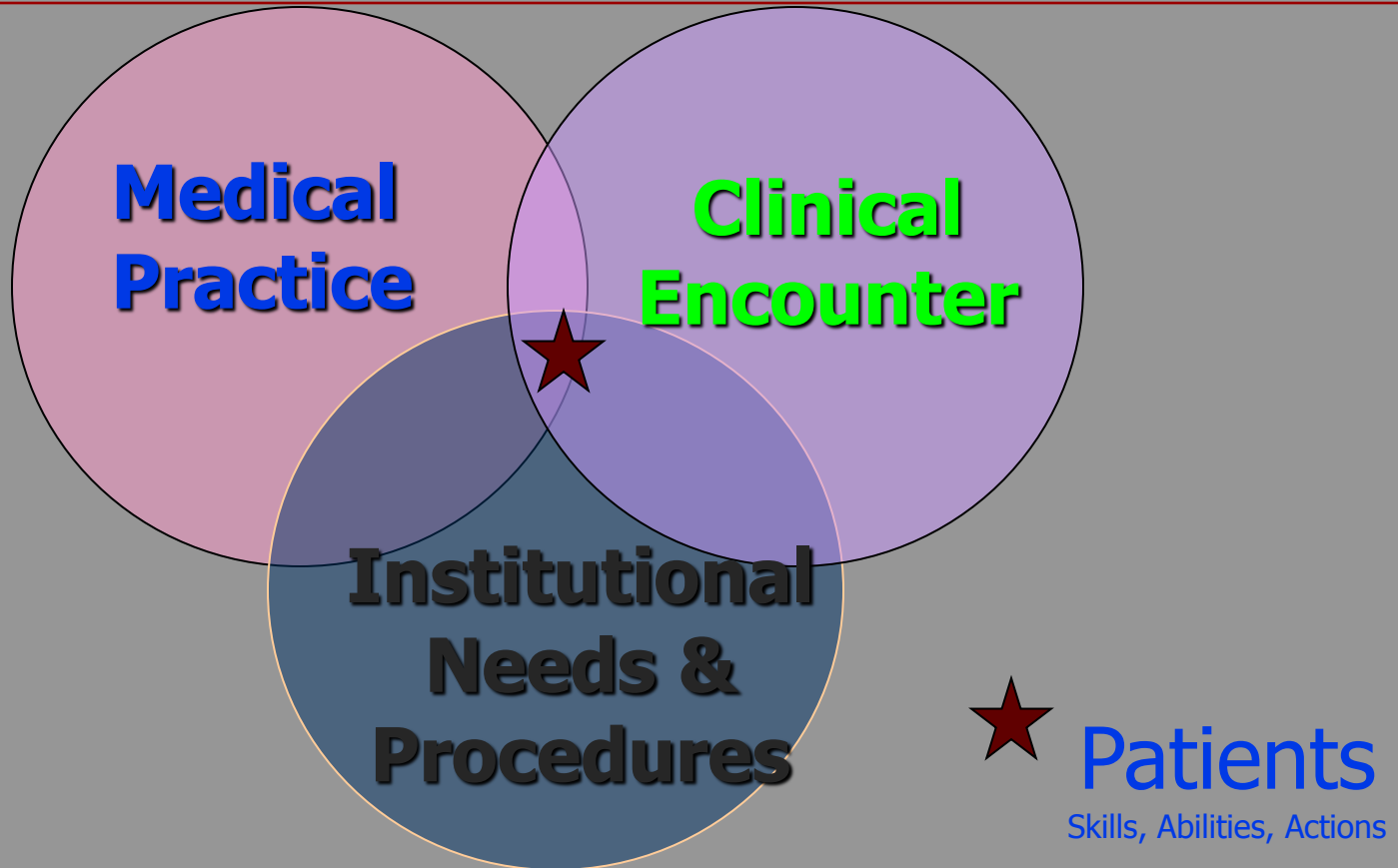
Literacy is linked to health outcomes even controlling for a variety of factors including SES



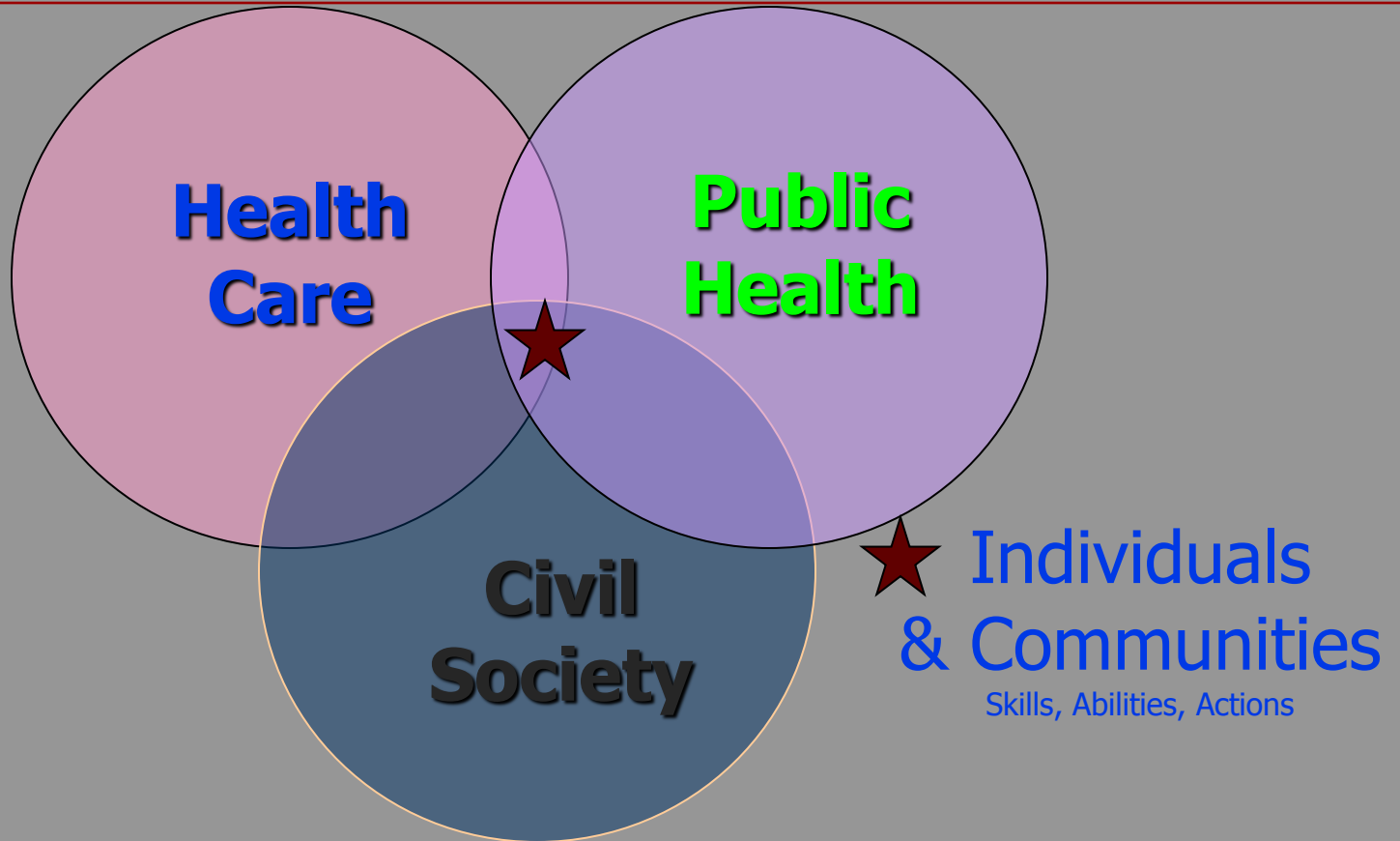
IOM, 2004
ETS, 2004
AHRQ 2004, 2011



Perspective



Perspective



Who is the focus of attention? Who carries the burden of change?



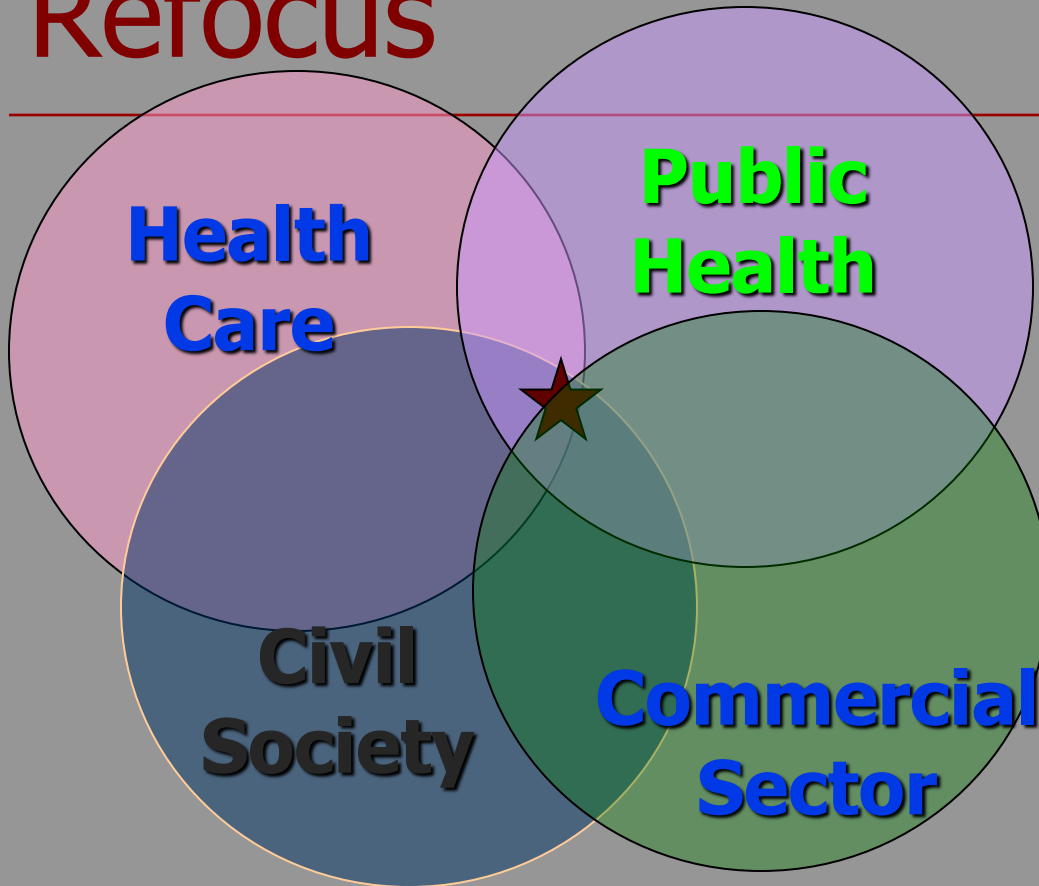
- Focus on individuals, patients, communities
- Action:
 - Participate
 - Find
 - Comprehend
 - Evaluate
 - Use
 - Determine

Interaction

Individual Factors ↔ **Health Sector Factors**

- Literacy & numeracy skills
- Language skills
- Emotional state
- Health status
- Experience
- Background knowledge
- Communication skills of professionals
- Institutional characteristics
- Procedures & processes
- Materials in use
- Assumptions

Refocus



- ★ Demands
- Expectations
- Processes
- Culture:
 - Roles
 - Language
 - Processes

Needed Emphasis: Balancing Act



Four Areas of Concern*

- Health information and education
- Clinical & health communications
- Health literate organizations
- Partnerships and engagement

*Maureen Johnson

1. Health Information & Education

Focus on Public / Patients

- Access to information [*accessible information*]
- Access to care & services
- Educational support & improvements

Action Examples: Access to Information & Education

- Make decisions
 - Needs & preferences shape information format & structure
 - Participation in review of materials, messages & tools
 - Participation in development of materials, messages & tools
- Develop knowledge: participation in research
- Make meaning: participation in analysis

2. Clinical & Health Information

Focus on Practice

- Application of tested principles
- Professional training & education
- Testing & licensure
- Continuing education
- Orientation programs

Focus on Materials & Tools

- Apply tested principles for development & design
- Rigorous Review:
 - Provide assessment test results & modifications
 - Pilot with intended audience and revise as needed
- Regulations for vendors

Action Examples

Practice

- Deconstruct health activities
- Apply teach back
- Encourage question asking
- Demand time
- Demand accessible/usable tools & materials

Materials & Tools

- Professional rigor for materials development [begin with critical texts]
 - Apply documented principles
 - Use assessment tools and document
 - Pilot test and report
 - Regulate processes

3. Health Literate Organizations

Focus on Health Contexts

- Responsibility for access & comprehension
- Physical environment: remove barriers, enhance dialogue
- Social context: change expectations, norms, language, & rituals
- Identify and assess critical texts

Action Examples

- Call to action:
 - Joint Commission: institutional responsibility
 - AMA: *shame free* environments
- Identify & remove barriers:
 - Examples from US, Spain, Italy
 - Prioritize, focus, evaluate: Instructions, Jump start, Question posing

4. Partnership and Engagement

Focus on Community Relations

- Community dialogue: felt & documented needs, perceptions, perspectives
- Participation on boards and committees
- Excursions into community
- Community tours and feedback

Action Examples

- Partnerships
 - Adult education: curriculum integration
 - Libraries
 - Chemists/Pharmacies
 - Journalism
 - Workforce initiatives
 - Education reform
- Brown bag events
- Talking circles
- Outreach: Family Van
- Welcome & Tour: Harlaam Hospital

Partners in Action

- Identify stakeholders
- Provide opportunities for discussion and analysis
- Develop consensus re: purview, responsibilities, actions
- Develop partnerships
- Generate ideas and projects

Consider Regulations

- Standards for critical texts
 - Processes for all vendors
 - Review boards
- Environmental standards
- Accreditation requirements
- Professional training & licensing requirements

Reminder: Focus on the Mismatch

- Develop strategies to improve access
- Identify and remove system barriers
- Evaluate interventions for ameliorative action

Reminder: Identify and Remove Barriers

- Analyses of dialogue [media and interpersonal]
- Analyses of texts [on paper and on line]
- Analyses of tools [materials and measures]
- Analyses of activities & processes
 - Deconstruction of health activities [Rudd et al 2004]
- Analyses of environments
 - Hospitals and health centers [Rudd & Anderson 2006]
 - Clinical practices [DeWalt et al 2010]

Reminder: Renew Attention to Disparities

- Distribution of literacy skills is linked to social factors [Rudd, Kirsch, Yamamoto, 2004]
- Literacy skills have implications for social justice [Rudd, 2007]
 - Access to information
 - Participation & Agency
 - In prevention and early detection
 - For chronic disease management
 - For informed choice [personal and policy]

Time for Outrage

We must rely on our belief in human rights, the violation of which must provoke our indignation

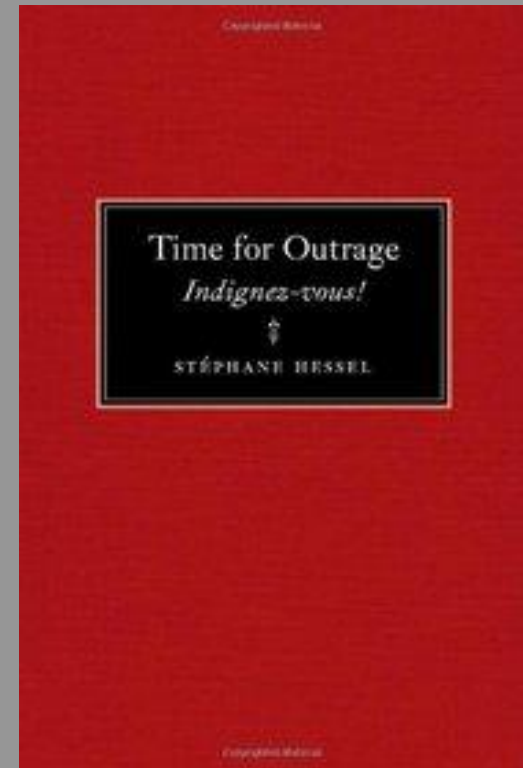
Time for Outrage



Stephane Hessel

Time for Outrage:
Indignez-vous!

New York, NY: Twelve.
2011.



Possible Benefits

- Participation
- Increased agency
- Enhanced access
- Reduced Disparities
- Social Justice
- Equity

Healthy Communities

- Food access & safety
- Safe housing
- Educational resources
- Health promotion & disease prevention
- Environmental health
- Occupational health & safety

US Action Plans: Do any of these apply?

- Health Literacy Action Plan 2003
- Institute of Medicine report 2004
- Joint Commission Whitepaper on Patient Safety and Health Literacy 2007
- National Action Plan 2011
- Plain Language Act

References [a start]

www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy

Literature review

Links to major studies

Action examples

Workshops and more

www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy

www.ahrq/healthliteracy/toolkit