

**The Ohio State University
AHEC Clear Health Communication Program**

MODULE DESCRIPTIONS

**Module 1: Health Literacy: It's Time To Take It Seriously!
CORE MODULE (This module should be completed first by all participants)**

This module is an introductory overview of health literacy. Included in the discussion is what we mean by low health literacy, the results of the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), populations at risk for low health literacy, the impact of health literacy, reading levels of health materials, and the consequences of the mismatch between the reading ability of most Americans and the difficulty of health-related materials. An overview of key elements in effective communication is presented.

The following modules provide training focused on individual behaviors, functionality in the healthcare environment, and personalized care.

Module 2: You Can't Tell By Looking! Assessing the Ability to Read and Understand Health Information

This module will help you determine whether a patient or family has a literacy problem. A discussion of whether or not to test a person for reading ability and comprehension is presented. Tools / tests available to measure a person's ability to read and understand health information are described, including the REALM, TOFHLA, and the Newest Vital Sign. Observations and key questions to ask that provide clues are included to help alert you that a person has low literacy skills.

Module 3: Creating a Shame-Free and Patient-Centered Environment for Those With Limited Literacy Skills

Typically, people with low literacy skills are ashamed of this problem and rarely tell anyone. Even people with good literacy skills may feel intimidated in the healthcare environment and may avoid asking questions, leading you to believe that they understand your instructions. This module will offer valuable insight and training in creating a helpful, respectful and caring healthcare environment. You will gain knowledge about how patients might better prepare for healthcare appointments, how clinicians can revise check-in and referral procedures, as well as the preparation of appropriate patient information that will break down barriers to effective healthcare.

Module 4: Getting Your Message Across: Clear and Effective Health Communication

Getting your message across and therefore providing responsive patient care is a primary goal in the understanding of health literacy. In this module you will learn how to assess a person's learning needs, and readiness to learn. You will learn how to select key methods and tools to use when giving instructions that will help a person, not only hear and understand, but take action on the health message. We address how to set priorities for health teaching; determine what to teach; and tips for teaching. Supplemental materials are made available on effective use of teaching methods,

audiovisual materials, and printed handouts, and on teaching those with special learning needs.

Module 5: Effective Verbal and Written Communications With Those From Other Cultures

With the ever increasing diversity of cultures in this nation, we need to be cognizant of how to be effective with verbal communication as well as making materials which are culturally appropriate for a wide variety of population groups. This means more than merely translating the words of English materials into another language, but rather thinking of new ways to organize and present materials. Additionally, the use of interpreters is addressed in this module.

Module 6: The Effects of Aging on Health Literacy

With the Baby Boom generation comprising almost 31% of America's population and people 85 and above being the fastest growing age group in the U.S., health professionals will have more and more contact with older adults. This module will address the various aspects of effective communication with older adults. You will also be introduced to a number of barriers to effective education for the older patient, such as vision and hearing changes, intellectual abilities and short-term memory, motivation and anxiety, and rigidity and cautiousness.

The following modules provide training focused on writing effective health materials.

Module 7: Who's Reading Your Writing? How Difficult Is Your Text?

All readability formulas measure reading difficulty from two features: average sentence length and average word length. Determining the reading level of a piece of health information, however, is only one factor that affects the difficulty or ease of reading. The most commonly used formulas, the SMOG and Fry, are presented in this module. The criteria for determining whether or not a piece of health education material is easy-to-read are also presented.

Module 8: Guidelines for Selecting and Writing Easy-To-Read Materials

A guideline for health education methods and materials that apply to any instructional media, as set forth by the authors C.Doak, L.Doak & J.Root is discussed in this module. Setting realistic objectives, focusing on behaviors and skills the person needs, presenting the context before new information, dividing complex instructions into small logical steps, and making instruction interactive are important concepts in this framework. This module discusses the use of plain language guidelines to help professionals clearly write understandable health education materials. How to determine relevant content, along with mind mapping, and principles with examples of writing style, organization, and appearance and design of materials are also presented.

Module 9: Are You On Target? The Basics of Audience Research and Field Testing Health Materials

Knowing what your intended reader needs and wants is essential for the development of easy-to-read materials. The best way to find this out is to ask them! This module explains why audience research is important, what and whom we are testing, recruiting participants, how to do the testing, examples of tools to use when testing, and using the results to refine our materials.

[The following module provides training from an institutional perspective.](#)

Module 10: Meeting the Challenges of Low Health Literacy in Your Organization

Once you've mastered the basics of communicating verbally and in writing in plain language, the question may be, "How can I make a difference for low-literacy persons served by my organization?" This module will take you through how to do an organizational audit to determine your current status in meeting the needs of those with limited literacy. A stepwise process needed to get others in your organization enthused about health literacy and strategies to develop a successful organizational response to meet the challenge are included.