

New Reader Statement

Representatives of the 17th Annual New Readers of Iowa Health Literacy Conference ask health professionals in all fields of practice to create a shame-free environment for all patients, especially those with low-literacy skills, new readers, and patients for whom English is a foreign language. Specifically we recommend the following systemic changes:

1. Become familiar with health literacy issues and review advocacy materials produced by:
 - [The Joint Commission](#)
 - Partnership for Clear Health Communication: [Ask Me 3](#)
 - [American Medical Association](#)
 - [Harvard School of Public Health](#)
 - [National Patient Safety Foundation](#)
 - [National Institutes of Health](#)
 - [Institute of Medicine of the National Academies](#)
2. Integrate these concepts and materials into your patient practice.
3. Create an environment where patients are encouraged to get involved in their health care – allow patients adequate time with providers and eliminate shame associated with literacy issues.
4. Use the "Teach Back" method to ensure patient understanding of medical instructions – review instructions both verbally and through written materials, ask patients to verbally repeat back instructions, and verbally review risks of not following through with prescribed treatments.
5. Invite patients to ask providers questions to increase understanding. Use the "Ask Me 3" program to encourage patients to understand the answers to these three questions: What is my main problem? What do I need to do? Why is it important for me to do this?
6. Work with professional colleagues to further disseminate health literacy information and materials.
7. Where possible, reduce bureaucracy so it is easier to receive medical treatment. Reduce the paperwork necessary to initiate medical treatment. Make required paperwork easier to understand. And provide shame-free opportunities to review paperwork verbally.

Further, we ask for increased collaboration between new readers and health professionals, identifying additional ways to make health care more accessible and safer for all patients

Archie Willard
New Reader from Iowa