Contents

List of Figures, Tables, and Appendices ix
Preface xi

Part I. Health Literacy: Understanding the Issues

Chapter 1. Introduction to Health Literacy 3
   Lynda M. Baker, Marge Kars, and Feleta L. Wilson

Chapter 2. Review of the Literature 9
   Nancy Schaefer
   Definitions of Health Literacy 9
   Components of Health Literacy 11
   Special Health Literacy 12
   Characteristics Correlating to Low Health Literacy 13
   Reasons for Concern 14
   Consequences of Low Health Literacy 19
   Proposed Solutions 20
   References 28

   Charlene Pope
   Introduction 55
   The Expanding Definition 56
   Theories of Language and Their Contribution to Health Literacy 58
   Social Practice in the New Forms of Health Literacy 59
   Social Biases and Their Role in Social Practice and Health Literacy 60
   Bridges to a More Multidimensional Health Literacy Solution 61
   Solutions 63
   References 64
Chapter 7. Health Literacy for People with Disabilities  
Shelley Hourston

Importance of Health Literacy Skills for People with Disabilities 117
Major Issues Affecting Health Literacy Skills for People with Disabilities 121
Reflections from Consumers 123
The Role of Librarians in Health Literacy for People with Disabilities 132
Direction for the Future 136
References 136

Chapter 8. Health Literacy and America’s Senior Citizens  
Marcy Brown

Review of Existing Research 140
A New Model of Health Literacy 143
Health Literacy Interventions Outside the Library 145
Librarians and Health Literacy Interventions 148
Learning Strategies for Older Adults 153
Future Directions for Libraries and Librarians 156
References 158

Chapter 9. A New Digital Divide: Teens and Internet Literacy  
Ellen Freda, Jonathan Hayes Goff, and Andrea L. Kenyon

Introduction 161
Background 161
Summer Teen Editor Program Goals 163
Program Methods 163
Program Materials and Expenses 164
Overview of Program Sessions 164
Summary of Program Findings 166
What Worked 168
What Did Not Work 169
Lessons Learned 171
Our Cautionary Tale: A New “Digital Divide” 171
Conclusion 172
References 174
Part III. Health Literacy Issues in Public and Hospital Libraries: Providing Programs and Services to Help Consumers Understand Their Healthcare

Chapter 10. The Health Reference Interview: Getting to the Heart of the Question While Assessing Your Customer’s Literacy Skills

Karyn Prechtel

The Health Reference Interview
Be Aware of the Person Asking the Question
Get as Much Information as Possible
Ask If They Have a Deadline
Is the Question Still Not Clear?
Follow-up
What Not to Do
What You Should Do
Reference Interview and Literacy Levels
Challenges of Telephone and E-mail Queries
Conclusion
References

Chapter 11. Public Libraries and Health Literacy

Barbara Bibel

Community Assessment
Collection Development
Training
Collaboration and Partnership
Outreach
Conclusion
References

Chapter 12. Health Literacy in Canada: Highlighting Library Initiatives

Susan Murray

Canadian Library Scene
British Columbia
Nova Scotia
Ontario
Quebec
Conclusion
References
Chapter 13. Consumer Health Services in Hospitals: The Front Line for Health Literacy

Julie Esparza

Consumer Health Services in Hospital Libraries Survey (CHSHL) 218
Internal Partnerships 218
Availability of Collection 221
Packets of Information 225
Outreach Services 231
Partnerships and Services 235
Conclusion 238
References 238

Chapter 14. Health Literacy in Action—The Bronson Experience

Marge Kars

Literature Review 243
The Bronson Initiatives 245
Other Bronson Health Literacy Initiatives 247
The Health Sciences Library Initiative 248
The Nursing Initiative 249
Lessons Learned 250
References 250

Part IV. The Future: Ways to Initiate and Become Involved with Health Literacy Programs

Chapter 15. Intervention Programs for Health Literacy

Cleo Pappas

What Is an Intervention? 259
Poor Health Literacy 260
Do Reading Levels Correspond to Consumer Needs? 261
Consequences of Poor Health Literacy 262
The Role of JCAHO 262
Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and Informed Consent 263
Role of Librarians 266
Role of Pharmacists 268
Readability 269
Conclusion 271
References 271
# List of Figures, Tables, and Appendices

## FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10-1</td>
<td>Online Form for E-Mail Queries</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 13-1</td>
<td>Library and Internal Hospital Consumers</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13-2</td>
<td>Availability of Collection to the Public</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13-3</td>
<td>Packets of Information for Customers</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13-4</td>
<td>Outreach Services</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIXES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2-1</td>
<td>Readability Formulae</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2-2</td>
<td>Literacy Tests Used in Healthcare Settings</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4-1</td>
<td>Cultural Competence Course</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4-2</td>
<td>Course Module Sequence</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9-1</td>
<td>Initial Survey Form</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9-2</td>
<td>Initial Survey Results</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9-3</td>
<td>Final Evaluation Form</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9-4</td>
<td>Final Evaluation Results—Web Site Features</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9-5</td>
<td>Final Evaluation Results—Internet Experience Preferences</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 11-1</td>
<td>A Quick Guide to Searching for Census Information</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 11-2</td>
<td>Sources for Foreign Materials</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 13-1</td>
<td>Consumer Health Services in Hospital Libraries Survey</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-1</td>
<td>Original Version of the Bronson Hospital Release Assignment Form</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-2</td>
<td>Revised Version of the Bronson Hospital Release Assignment Form</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-1</td>
<td>Resources on Health Literacy for Librarians</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-1</td>
<td>METRO Special Interest Group on Consumer Health One-Day Conference on Health Literacy: Preconference Survey</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

Health literacy is a vital component of consumer health. The publication of the Institute of Medicine’s report *Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion* (2004), coupled with the 2003 *National Assessment of Adult Literacy* (NAAL), brought national attention to a serious problem: people with low literacy skills often cannot read or understand information about their diagnosis, medications, or appointments with their physician. They may be unable to understand the directions for preparing for a medical test, or use written information about staying healthy. These same individuals have a higher incidence of disease, risk higher use of the emergency room, have longer hospital stays with higher hospital admission rates, and suffer medication errors because they cannot read or understand a prescription label. Librarians in all types of libraries can play a major role in health literacy, helping consumers to access and better understand health information.

The idea for *The Medical Library Association Guide to Health Literacy* evolved from my own experience working in a hospital-based consumer health library providing health information to consumers, and from discussions with colleagues who work with customers, in all types of libraries, looking for understandable health information.

The Medical Library Association, the world’s preeminent educational organization for health information professionals, recognizing the important role that librarians play in providing health information, has partnered with other library organizations, on the state and national levels, to increase awareness of the seriousness of this issue and collaborate to create solutions for healthcare consumers.

In 2006, I invited two colleagues from Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan—Lynda M. Baker (Library and Information Science Program) and Feleta L. Wilson (College of Nursing)—to work with me on this book about health literacy. Lynda and Feleta were the first to publish in LIS journals studies
of the literacy levels of consumer health materials. Because the importance of health literacy transcends any particular library boundary, we decided the book should be a forum for LIS professionals involved in the health literacy movement. To provide a comprehensive overview, we recruited practitioners from all types of libraries, as well as researchers in academia, to write about health literacy from their unique perspectives. After reading this guide, librarians should be better able to understand the issues that comprise health literacy, learning how to help others become health literate and how to become change agents within their organizations.

As editors, we have tried to ensure the use of gender-neutral language throughout the book. Because we find “he/she” to be clunky, we have chosen to use either “she” or “he” as equally as possible. This book is not meant to be read from cover to cover; rather, we believe readers will select chapters relevant to their situations and interests. Therefore, instead of having one definition of health literacy located in the Preface, we have allowed authors to define health literacy as it relates to and forms the basis of their work.

The Medical Library Association Guide to Health Literacy features 16 chapters, divided into four parts. The four parts:

• cover the essential issues surrounding health literacy;
• identify often overlooked implications of the influence of culture, ethnicity, special needs, and age in health;
• highlight the nation’s best practices for public and hospital library consumer health programs and services; and,
• suggest proven ways libraries can initiate their own and partner with other organizations’ health literacy programs.

In Chapter 1 the editors provide an introduction to the issues of health literacy. The different types of health literacy are defined in Chapter 2, along with a discussion on causes, effects, and solutions. A comprehensive list of readability formulae and literacy tests used in the healthcare setting is included with this chapter.

Chapter 3 looks at the role social bias plays in health encounters and how it affects health literacy. The author discusses theories of language and their contribution to health literacy, the health encounter as a literacy event, and social biases in relation to health literacy and their effects on provider and patient behavior and institutional practices. Health literacy within the context of culture, as well as the importance of cultural competency of librarians in relation to a client’s health literacy skills is the subject of Chapter 4. An outline and sequence of activities for a course titled “Cultural Competence for Health Information Professionals,” developed by the author, is presented in this chapter.
Chapter 5 covers the impact of low literacy on the patient and the family from a nursing perspective. The author discusses characteristics of patients with low literacy, the association between low literacy and health disparities, and the need for partnership between nurses and librarians. This disturbing divide is further explored in Chapter 6, which summarizes the literature on the relationship between low literacy levels and the effects on patient care and health outcomes. The authors also discuss the role librarians can take in helping to narrow the health literacy gap.

Raising awareness of the complexities of health literacy for people with disabilities is the focus of Chapter 7. The author addresses how librarians can partner with people with disabilities and the community. She includes some personal perspectives of people with various types of disabilities about health literacy and ways libraries and librarians can help them find information.

Chapter 8 posits a new model of health literacy. The author looks at health literacy within the context of senior citizens, provides some examples of health literacy interventions both inside and outside the library. Chapter 9 describes the authors’ efforts to build a foundation of health literacy among adolescents in Philadelphia. Useful information on what worked and what does not work in their collaboration with the teens is also presented.

The health reference interview is part of the individual’s ability to obtain or access health information. This initial step in the health literacy process is the focus of Chapter 10.

Public libraries should be the major provider of consumer health information. Chapter 11 features a particularly successful collaboration between a public library and a hospital library. The author also provides a list of sources of non-English language materials for a library’s collection.

Some of the health literacy initiatives by Canadian librarians and the difficulties in finding information on the activities of librarians in the area of health literacy are addressed in Chapter 12.

The results of a study on consumer health services provided by hospital librarians are provided in Chapter 13; this chapter also highlights what other hospital libraries have done to address health literacy. The partnering of hospital librarians with other hospital departments to provide consumer health services is described in Chapter 14, where the author also offers an in-depth look some of the health literacy initiatives that are taking place at one teaching hospital.

The numerous intervention programs for professionals engaged in health literacy efforts are presented in Chapter 15.

Examples of health literacy collaborations are provided in Chapter 16, including examples from New York City. The authors also discuss how to find funding support for health literacy initiatives.
I would like to thank my co-editors, Lynda and Feleta, and each of the authors who agreed to contribute to *The Medical Library Association Guide to Health Literacy*. We hope this guide will both inform and inspire our colleagues in all types of libraries to help their communities live longer and healthier lives.

Marge Kars

REFERENCES


The Medical Library Association Guide to Developing Consumer Health Collections guides both library graduate school students and seasoned librarians from academic, health sciences, and public libraries, to develop, maintain, nurture, and advertise consumer health collections. This authoritative guide from the respected Medical Library Association covers all that is involved in developing a new consumer health library including: Conducting community needs assessments and forging. Important topics that impact collection decisions, such as health literacy and multiculturalism are discussed and resources are listed where the reader can learn even more. The Medical Library Association (MLA) is a nonprofit, educational organization with more than 3,400 health sciences information professional members and partners worldwide. Founded on May 2, 1898, by four librarians, including Marcia C. Noyes, and four physicians, the Association of Medical Librarians, as it was known until 1907, was founded to encourage the improvement and increase of public medical libraries. MLA is the second oldest special library association in the United States. Two of the Medical Library and Historical Journal Vols. 1 to 5; 1903 to 1907. Vol. 5 1907. Bulletin of the Association of Medical Librarians Vol. 1; 1902. Vol. 1 1902. v.1(1-2); 41 1902 Jan.