The Impact of Health Literacy on Health Status and Resource Utilization in Lumbar Degenerative Disease

Morgan Brown, MS
Norton Leatherman Spine Center
Louisville, Kentucky
Introduction

• Examine health literacy/resource utilization in chronic low back pain in an outpatient setting

• Only 3 relevant studies were found; none in US-based population

• Health literacy posited to be related to patient outcome reports
Methods

• Patients recruited at Norton Leatherman Spine Center in downtown Louisville KY

• Completed measures of literacy, resource utilization and outcomes
Methods

• Newest Vital Sign
  – Administered verbally to patient
  – Required numerical skills

• Health LITT
  – Modified from online to paper-based format
  – 10 questions, reading comprehension

• Resource Utilization
  – Type of treatments, medication use

• Demographics
Methods

- **Outcomes**
  - **EQ5D:** 5 questions with VAS
    - Mobility
    - Self-care
    - Usual activities
    - Pain/discomfort
    - Anxiety/Depression
  - **ODI:** 10 questions with back/leg pain
    - Lifting
    - Walking, sitting, standing
    - Social life
    - Sleeping
    - Sex life
    - Travelling
Results

- 201 Patients approached, 186 completed both health literacy measures
- 17% (30) limited literacy likely (0-1 correct responses on NVS)
- 28% (52) possible limited literacy (2-3 correct responses)
- 56% (104) adequate literacy (4-6 correct responses)
- Limited literacy group had worse outcome scores than those in possible and adequate literacy
Results

• Limited and possible limited literacy groups (53%) used less medications than those in the adequate literacy group (80%)

• 30% of limited and possible limited literacy patients reported they had physical therapy visits after stating they had no physical therapy prescribed
Discussion

• In sum: Health literacy related to resource utilization, how questions are answered, and reported outcomes
• Potentially undermines outcome data; spine relies on patient reported outcomes as there is no objective measure
Thank you!