

Results of an evaluation of the health literacy environment in 10 Catalan hospitals

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Context

- 20-30% of Europeans are functionally illiterate. *OECD PISA survey 2006*
 - 50% of the Spanish population between 24-64 years graduated from obligatory education. *OECD Education at a glance 2008*
 - Mismatch between the reading level of health materials and average reading skills among adults. *Rudd R 2004*
 - People with limited reading skills are less likely to use prevention services, have less knowledge of their illness, are more likely to be hospitalized/readmitted. *IOM Washington 2004*
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Objectives

Present results of the health literacy environment in Catalanian Hospitals:

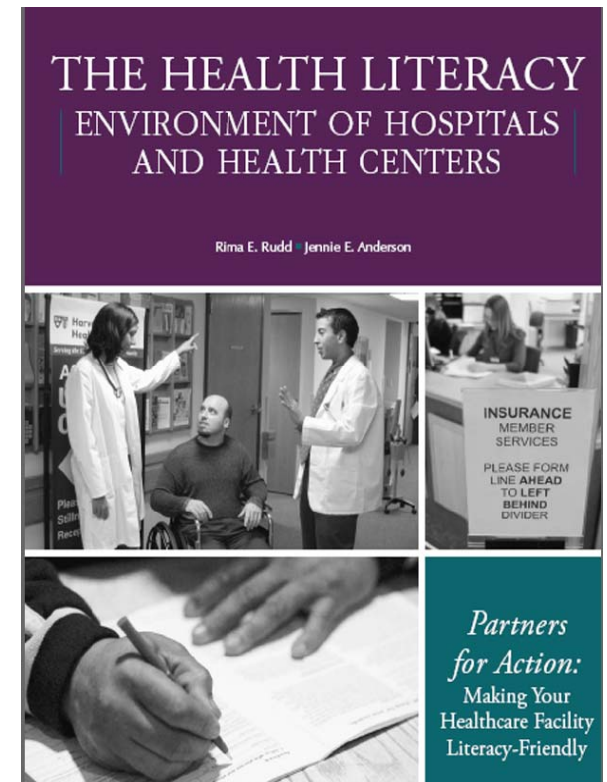
- a) navigation in 10 hospitals (signs and telephone)
 - b) assessment of written communication for 1 out of 3 care processes: cataract.
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Methods

1. Navigation system:
standardized ratings based on
internal self-assessment and
external participant observation.

2. Written communication:
legibility assessment tools such as
SAM, INFLESZ, Fernández-Huertas,
PMOSE/IKIRSCH and Plain Word
technique.





Setting

10 hospitals in Catalonia.



Participants: Project coordinator and hospitals representatives (managers, quality care or client service directors).

Material: informed consent forms, patient information materials (cataract).



Results: Navigation



- Poor accessibility and illegible signs
- Scientific language and acronyms
- Signs in one language only
- Lack of consistency (terminology)
- No maps and no visual elements
- Efforts to create friendly environment
- Helpful staff
- Improvised signs



Results: Navigation

“We are Mediterraneans. We don’t mind asking”.

“I frequently got lost in the first 4 days I started working here”.

“Hospitals are constantly changing. Services are moving”.

“Patients need to learn the structure of the hospitals.”

“The letters cannot be bigger. We have city hall's guidelines.”



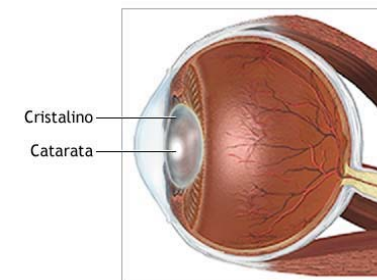
INFLESZ

Hospital	INFLESZ		
	Informed consent	Before surgery	After surgery
Hospital A	54.5	56.9	66.5
Hospital B	65.7	73.6	62.6
Hospital C	48.4	64.4	59.9
	52.2		
Hospital D	51.9	71.6	65.0
Hospital E	59.6	87.2	73.1
Hospital F	44.3	69.0	62.3
Hospital G			61.9

college degree

secondary school

primary school





Plain language examples

- “Oftalmological surgery” = **eye operation**
- “Administer” = **take**
- “Analgesic” = **pain killer (“calmante”)**
- “You have to restrain yourself from drinking alcohol beverages”
= **don’t drink alcohol**
- “The purpose of this information is not to alarm you, nor to free the doctor of any responsibility. It simply represents an effort to inform you so that you can make the decision, free and voluntary, to either authorize or reject the following procedure.”
= **The benefits of the XX procedure are.... You can change your mind at any time.**





Results: written communication

Achievements

- 6 workshops organized:
10 participants each.



- Checklist of minimum requirements for the elaboration of patient materials routinely used in hospitals.
- Best practice patient materials on Cataract.



Discussion

- Small sample of hospitals and written documents.
- Avoid delays which affect both patients and health professionals.
- Written information for patients can be improved substantially by using simple semantic and graphical assessment tools.
- Without a culture supportive of health literacy (top management support) it is difficult to induce changes.

Future challenge: evaluation of the oral communication (currently ongoing) through a patient satisfaction survey.



Thank you!

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