

# How we define health literacy affects how we practice and measure health literacy

---

**Don Rubin**

University of Georgia



*The University of Georgia*

---

***Center for Health & Risk Communication***

---

“Words can be meaningless. If they are used in such a way that no sharp conclusions can be drawn.”

— Richard Feynman, *The Meaning of It All: Thoughts of a Citizen-Scientist*

# Is health literacy the same as health knowledge?

## Challenge Your Health IQ



Challenge your Health IQ in this fun and educational health trivia app.



## Are You a Trivia Buff?

Do you know the minimum SPF needed to protect yourself from the sun's harmful rays? Or how many seconds you should wash your hands to kill germs? Test your Health IQ to see how your health skills stack up.

## Test Your Health IQ

Let our game show scientist lead you through an exciting selection of trivia questions and word scrambles. Choose from three levels of difficulty, Easy, Medium, or Hard...or be surprised by selecting a Random mix.

## Earn IQ Points for Correct Answers

Race against the clock to earn more points or use hints when you are stumped. Each quiz delivers a mix of 10 questions. Answer as many of the 10 questions correctly and as quickly as possible with the hopes of earning bonuses like A+ Student, Public Health Nerd, and Einstein or score poorly and earn the Hot Mess achievement!

## Play Again and Again!



# Or is health literacy primarily about **discourse** practices for acquiring, sharing, and using information?

- eHealth Literacy Scale (Norman et al, 2006)
  - e.g., I know **where** to find helpful health resources on the Internet
- Patient-Centered Communication in Cancer Care (Mazor et al., 2013; McCormack et al., 2011)
  - e.g., This doctor helped me understand my treatment choices
- CDC Clear Communication Index
  - e.g., clear call to action

*The University of Georgia*

*Center for Health & Risk Communication*

# Is health literacy primarily a property of patients (and consumers)?

---

Haun et al. 2014 “Inventory” taxonomy:

- literacy/reading
- interaction/communication
- comprehension
- numeracy
- information seeking
- application/function
- decision making/critical thinking
- evaluation
- responsibility/locus of control
- confidence
- navigation

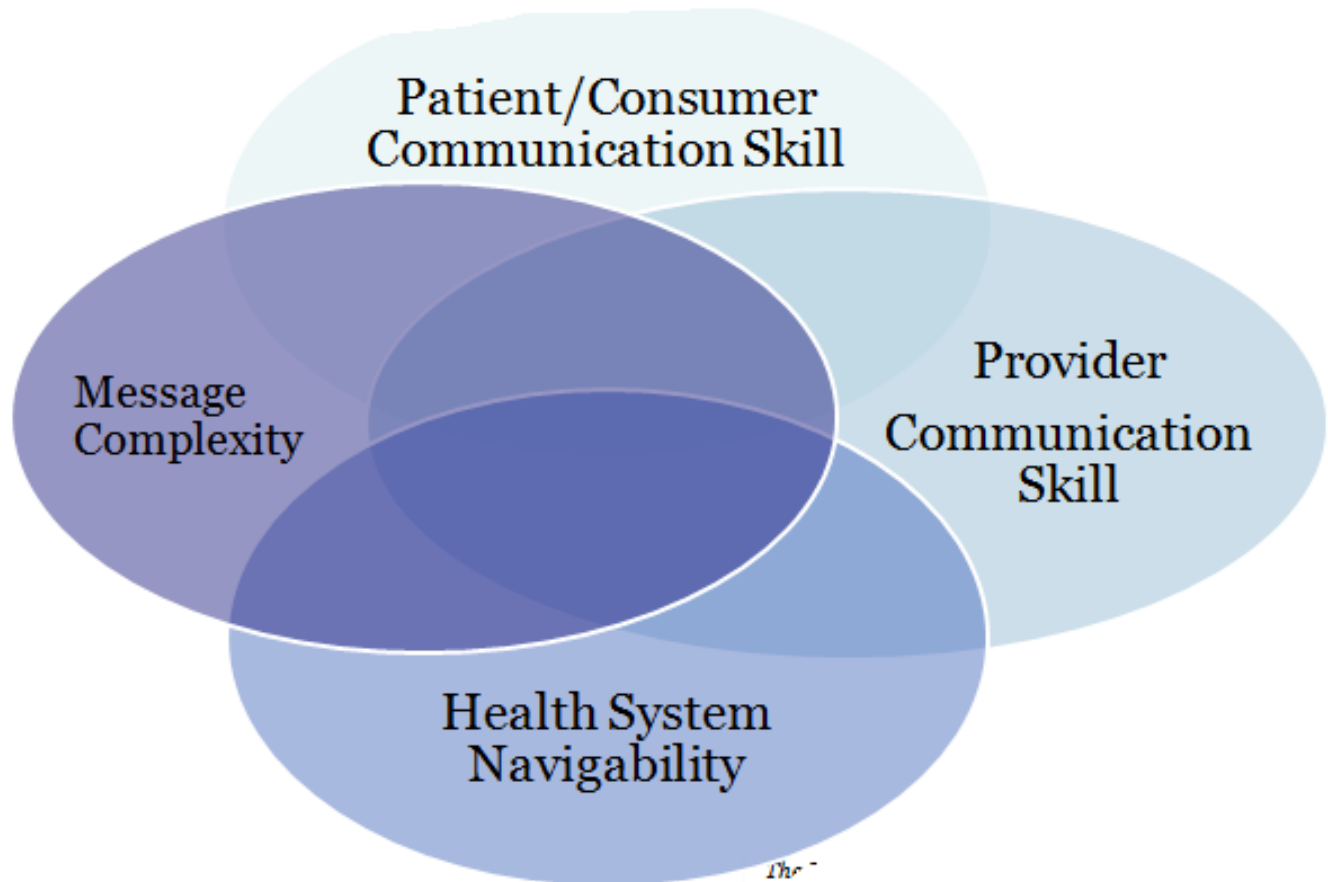
*The University of Georgia*

---

***Center for Health & Risk Communication***

---

**Or is health literacy a conjoint function of patient, provider, message complexity and healthcare system?**



# Is health literacy a trait?

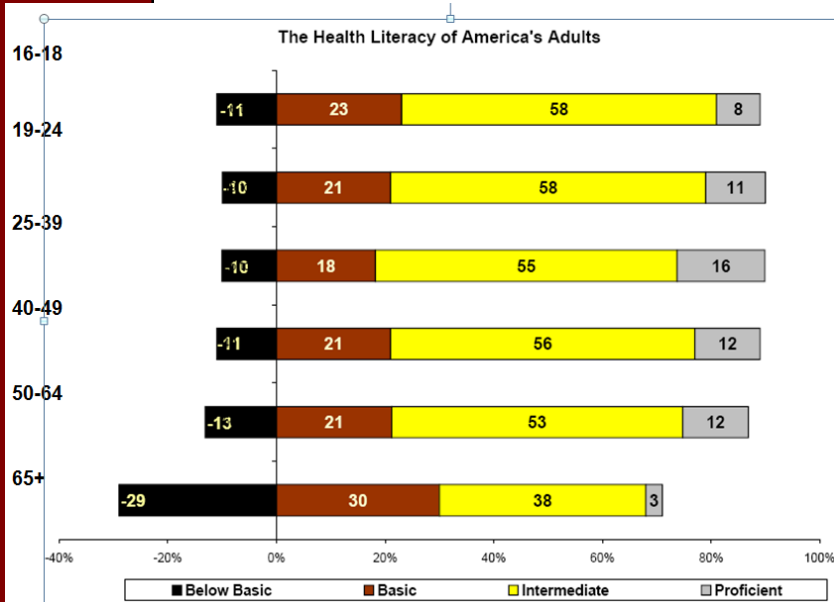


Table 2. Readability Scores by Disease Category.

Disease	n	SMOG
Heart disease	20	12.50 ± 1.88
Cancer	20	12.65 ± 2.08
Stroke	20	13.95 ± 1.61
COPD	20	11.80 ± 2.44
Diabetes	20	14.40 ± 1.47

Walsh & Volsko, 2008

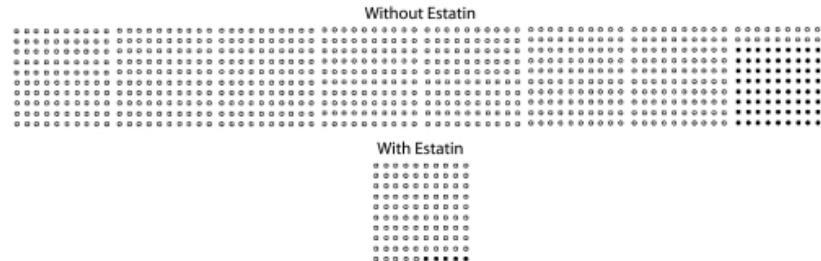
The University of Georgia

Center for Health & Risk Communication

# Or is health literacy a state, or even a process?

- Just in time interventions
  - e.g., treatment-specific decision aids

A new drug for reducing cholesterol, Estatin, decreases the risk of dying from a heart attack for people with high cholesterol. Here are the results of a study of 900 such people: 80 out of 800 of those who did not take the drug died of a heart attack, compared with 5 out of 100 of those who took the drug.



Garcia-Retamero &  
Galesic, 2009

- Performance assessments
  - e.g., Newest Vital Sign Weiss, 2005
  - e.g., Measure of Interactive Health Literacy Rubin et al, 2011

*The University of Georgia*

***Center for Health & Risk Communication***