

Wisconsin Nurses Association
2010 Reference Report #3

Subject: Addressing Health Literacy Through Patient Literacy
Introduced by: WNA Delegates to 2010 ANA House of Delegates Meeting
WNA Core Issue: Patient Safety/Advocacy

Summary

As the cost for healthcare continues to surge, there is an underlying acknowledgement that consumers must become active members in their healthcare decisions. Healthcare reform is a monumental paradigm shift, which aims to transition our nation's healthcare from a reactive delivery system to a patient-centered proactive preventive/predictive model. To get patients to a level where informed healthcare decisions are shared, patients must have a good understanding of their health status and provider's instructions. Lack of patient knowledge leads to return visits, recidivism, and an increased financial burden. Providers need to present information in a manner patients can understand, recall, and utilize in their life and healthcare choices.

Health literacy becomes an issue when patients do not understand their health status, provider recommendations, and their role in health decisions and actions. Improving health literacy can decrease a nation's overall healthcare burden. Patient education offers a solution to address the problem of poor health literacy. Patient education is an often assumed, overlooked, ill-planned, and undervalued responsibility shared among licensed healthcare providers, yet it serves as the foundation on which a patient gains the knowledge needed to manage their health. Poor patient health knowledge physically and financially impacts patient outcomes. Other healthcare professions have selected health literacy as a focus of concern. The nation's patients and consumers of healthcare services need their most trusted professionals - nurses - to drive substantial initiatives to address health literacy concerns.

The revised 2009 document, *The Wisconsin Nursing Community Agenda for Healthcare Reform* (WNA 2009) addressed the need to focus on health literacy because "... it improves health outcomes." The document emphasized that healthcare provider's need to:

- "Provide individuals with information and support to better negotiate complex health care systems and use knowledge to effectively enhance their health,
- Deliver services that are culturally sensitive and appropriate,
- Disseminate reliable and user-friendly information that is transparent about quality and cost,
- Assure health care providers have the tools, skills and systems that support consumer health literacy, and
- Empower individuals to make health choices." (WNA 2009)

Recommendations: That the Wisconsin Nurses Association:

1. Promote and support nursing initiatives created to address the resolution of health literacy problems in our state; and
2. Encourage and support nursing research efforts to identify evidence-based practices that promote optimum health literacy.

WNA Goal: Goal I. Collectively and collaboratively advocate for access to comprehensive quality health care services for all people.

Fiscal Note:

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Continue to offer educational topics on health literacy and nursing's role. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sponsor sessions at WNA/WSNA Annual Meetings	Nursing Education Council and Nursing Research Council	\$ 0.00
Compile resource listing of nursing research related to identifying evidence-based practices that promote health literacy and publish in <i>STAT Bulletin</i> .	Research Council	0.00
Conference Calls focusing on this topic <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 members x \$.10/minute x 60 minutes• Posting information in <i>STAT Bulletin</i> and electronic	Research Council	36.00 0.00
Total Reference #3		\$36.00

References:

American Nurses Association (2010). House of Delegates Report: Addressing Health Literacy through Patient Literacy.

Wisconsin Nurses Association (2009). The Wisconsin Nursing Community Agenda for Health Care Reform. Retrived WNA August 6, 2010 from http://www.wisconsinnurses.org/Health_Care-Reform.php