



# In the Know:

## Health literacy news and best practices

December 2017

### HCMC promotes health literacy

Advancing health literacy in Minnesota is a big task. Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) is up to the challenge, and has used several strategies to improve their health literacy efforts.

- **Plain language**  
During Health Literacy Month in October, HCMC hosted an event to encourage staff to take the plain pledge. During the event, staff members took a pledge to stop using jargon and terms that are often confusing. Instead, they pledged to use plain language to better explain these words. Almost 50 staff members signed the pledge!
- **Health literacy software**  
To help improve patient education materials, HCMC started using Health Literacy Advisor software. This software evaluates the readability of printed materials.



HCMC staff stand by the “wheel of confusion” during a Health Literacy Month event.



People took the plain pledge to stop using words that are difficult to understand and instead use plain language.

HCMC has also started to use the software when training nurse residents to help them better understand health literacy and its importance to patient health.

- **Quick use tool**  
HCMC created a pocket health literacy guide for nurses to reference as they work with patients.
- **Wheel of confusion**  
During an event in October, HCMC had a “wheel of confusion.” Patients and staff spun the wheel and provided a plain language word in place of a complicated health term.

If you would like plain pledge signs and more ideas to promote health literacy, view our [plain language toolkit](#).

### Did you know?

- The healthcare system represents **17.8%** of the United States' Gross Domestic Product.\*
- Limited health literacy is estimated to cost the United States economy up to **\$236 billion** every year.\*\*
- Patients with low health literacy have an average health care cost of **\$13,000** compared to only **\$3,000** for those with higher literacy levels.\*\*\*

\*Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

\*\*University of Connecticut

\*\*\*American Medical Association Foundation

### Follow us on social media

Stay up-to-date on health literacy best practices, tips, and events by following the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership on social media.



@MNHealthLit



@MNHealthLit



@Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership

## Useful tools to promote plain language

This October we celebrated a successful Health Literacy Month, where health care professionals took part in our Plain Language Campaign. But using plain language isn't just for one month – it's important throughout the year.

To help you and your organization promote health literacy in Minnesota, we've developed a plain language toolkit. This kit includes several educational and awareness building materials.

- **Key messages and talking points**

Short, helpful messages that explain health literacy in plain language. This information can be utilized in a variety of ways, like when drafting company communications or training health care professionals.

- **Business case**

This document outlines the reasons for implementing plain language practices, including the financial impact for businesses.

- **Presentations**

The PowerPoint presentations explain plain language, clear



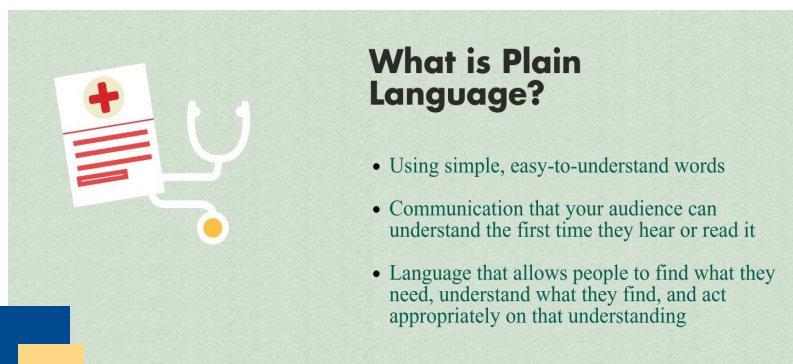
Members of the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership display their plain pledges. Thanks to everyone who got involved and took the pledge!

health communications, and the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership. These are great to use when training and building awareness.

- **Plain pledge**

Print the sign out, write down a health-related word you promise to stop using or better explain, snap a photo, and share it on social media with #PlainPledge@!

The toolkit also includes training tips, sample social media posts, quizzes, puzzles, and more. To view these materials, visit the [Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership website](#).



This infographic is one of many tools you and your organization can use to learn about and promote plain language.

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## Upcoming events

### **Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership meetings**

- Minnesota Literacy Council  
Saint Paul  
(First Wednesday of the month)
- January 3
  - February 7
  - March 7
  - April 4

*Our website will be updated in case a meeting is cancelled or rescheduled.*

### **Oregon and Southwest Washington Health Literacy Conference**

- Legacy Health | Portland, OR
- March 22-23

### **17th Annual Health Literacy Conference**

- Institute for Healthcare Advancement  
Irvine, CA
- May 9-11

## Become a member of the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership

Join our statewide collaborative effort to address low health literacy rates in a coordinated and cost-effective way.

Members include:

- Health care professionals, clinics, and companies
- Community organizations
- Social service agencies
- People interested in health literacy

Members have access to health education materials and training curricula, as well as monthly networking and informational meetings.

Visit our [website](#) for more information.

[healthliteracymn.org](http://healthliteracymn.org)