



In the Know:

Health literacy news and best practices

October 2021

It's Health Literacy Month!

October is national **Health Literacy Month**. While improving health literacy is important year-round, this month is a reminder for organizations and individuals to promote the importance of understandable health information.

Our theme for this year's Health Literacy Month is **Digital & Telehealth Literacy**. A theme we chose due to the nature of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its profound impact on the way we stay connected and seek care.

Millions of Americans used telehealth services during the early pandemic months, when social distancing guidelines and stay-at-home orders began to take effect. Levels of telehealth use have remained high in 2021, which suggests that telehealth is the "new normal" in health care.

A recent analysis conducted by the consulting firm McKinsey & Company found that **telehealth usage has stabilized at levels 38 times higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic**.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Roundtable on Health Literacy suggests that while virtual or telehealth services may have many important benefits to patients—such as increased convenience and reduced waits—they may also pose challenges for those with low health literacy.

The pandemic has revealed the gap between people who can benefit from technology and those who cannot, known as the **digital divide**.

It is more important than ever to put health literacy best practices such as, using plain language and the teach back method, into place.

Did you know?

During the first 4 months of the pandemic (March – June 2020), telehealth visits accounted for **24%** of all health care interactions, compared to less than 1% during the same time period in 2019.¹

18 million households do not have internet access including 14 million low-income households in urban areas and 4 million in rural areas.²

1 in 3 workers has limited or no digital skills. 2 out of every 3 Black or Latino workers has limited or no digital skills.²

<https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/study-365m-people-reveals-huge-jump-pandemic-telehealth-use>

²<https://www.literacymn.org/digitalalliteracy>



SAVE-THE-DATE

Lunch & Learn presentation
Digital and Telehealth Literacy

A virtual event on October 22,
2021 at 12:00 noon.

Please email
Alisha.Odhiambo@bluecrossmn.com
if interested in attending.

Using Plain Language

With the increase use of telehealth and virtual care, the importance of understanding terms used in the digital world is critical. Remember to use **plain language** - words someone understands the first time they hear or read it - when explaining terms that may be new or confusing to patients and care givers.

Electronic health record: A computer record of a patient's medical history, diagnoses, medications, treatment plans, vaccine dates, allergies, imaging, and test results.

Home site: The place where a patient is located during a telehealth appointment.

Remote patient monitoring device: A piece of technology that a patient wears at home. This device tracks the patient's health information and sends it to the patient's doctor.

Remote site: The place where a doctor, nurse, or other health care worker is located during a telehealth appointment.

Telehealth: A wide range of health services that are provided through digital technology, such as computers and cell phones.

Virtual visit: A meeting between a patient and a health care worker that takes place through a computer, cell phone, or other Internet-based technology. The patient and the provider are in different locations during the virtual visit.

Upcoming events

[Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership meetings](#)

Virtual Meetings
10:30 a.m.-noon, first Wednesday of the month

- October 6
- November 3
- December - *no meeting (happy holidays!)*

[Digital & Telehealth Literacy Webinar](#)

- October 22

[Virtual Health Literacy in Action Conference](#)

- October 14-15

[Health Literacy Annual Research Conference](#)

Virtual Event
• November 1-2

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Check out our crossword puzzle!

Looking for a fun way to test your digital and telehealth vocabulary skills? Maybe do it together with your team to start a conversation about health literacy this month. *Visit our website to see the answer key.*



View Roundtable on Health Literacy Workshop

On September 23, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Roundtable on Health Literacy held a public workshop, [Providing Health Literate Virtual Health Services](#).

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