

Evaluating the readability of the Emergency Department discharge instructions

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Abstract

Health literacy is commonly defined as the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy Research, only 12% of the entire population have proficient health literacy. Patients with low health literacy levels have a difficult time interpreting the health information given to them to support their engagement with treatment plans. Documentation given to patients does not meet health literacy standards, they are often written beyond the comprehension level of patients. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the materials given to patients upon discharge from emergency departments (ED). The study analyzes 26 discharge packets, including the patient education material and the clinical summary and identifies potential areas of confusion that may lead to misunderstanding of the instructions. The materials were analyzed for readability using the CDC's Clear Communication Index which contains 20 scored items grounded in communication science to enhance patients' understanding of health information. The average score of the clinical summaries and patient education materials examined with the CDC Clear Communication Index indicates that the items on the document are not easy to understand or use. We believe that patients are better equipped to follow a treatment plan that they can read and understand. The next step after content analysis will be redesigning and modifying the areas identified by low index scores. Specific changes to improve the score include simpler language, more specific examples, and clearer numerical explanations. Future research involves the testing of adapted materials for patient preference and understanding and the electronic adaption of discharge materials from commercial electronic health records.

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Speaker Publications:

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Biography:

Dr. Gauri Pande is a dentist from India and has completed her Masters in Health policy and administration from Washington State University. She works as a Quality Improvement manager