

Communication Techniques for Patients With Low Health Literacy: A Survey of Physicians, Nurses, and Pharmacists

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Objective: To explore the self-reported techniques used by health care professionals to enhance communication with patients with low health literacy. **Methods:** A survey was administered to physicians (n=99), nurses (n=87), and pharmacists (n=121) attending continuing education programs on patient safety and health care quality. Each was asked to rate communication-enhancing strategies by frequency of use and effectiveness with patients with low health literacy. **Results:** Using simple language (94.7%), hand-

ing out printed materials (70.3%), and speaking more slowly (67.3%) were the most commonly used strategies. Strategies currently recommended by health literacy experts were less routinely used. **Conclusions:** Further research is needed that evaluates the effectiveness of communication strategies for patients with limited literacy skills within diverse clinical encounters.

Key words: health literacy, communication, patient education

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