

# Measuring Adult Literacy in Health Care: Performance of the Newest Vital Sign

Chandra Y. Osborn, PhD; Barry D. Weiss, MD; Terry C. Davis, PhD  
Silvia Skripkauskas, BA; Christopher Rodrigue, BA; Pat F. Bass III, MD  
Michael S. Wolf, PhD, MPH

---

**Objective:** To compare performance of the newest vital sign (NVS) with existing literacy measures. **Methods:** We administered the NVS and REALM to 129 patients, and NVS and S-TOFHLA to 119 patients all in public clinics. **Results:** The NVS demonstrated high sensitivity for detecting limited literacy and moderate specificity (area under the receiver operating characteristic [AUROC] curve 0.71-0.73). The NVS was less effective than the S-TOFHLA

for predicting health outcomes. **Conclusion:** The NVS is able to identify patients with limited literacy skills, but may misclassify those with adequate literacy according to the REALM and S-TOFHLA. NVS scores were not associated with health outcomes.

**Key words:** health literacy, literacy, measurement, newest vital sign, outcomes, screening

*Am J Health Behav.* 2007;31(Suppl 3):S36-S46

---