

Health Literacy

PROBLEM Statement



1 in 5 adults can not:

- ▶ read a prescription label
- ▶ follow doctors' written directions
- ▶ understand information about preventing disease.

They are **50% more likely to die** from disease than patients who are literate. (*Archives of Internal Medicine*)

People with limited reading and writing abilities tend to:

- ▶ have poorer health,
- ▶ avoid seeing the doctor because they can not complete medical forms...

which results in worsening conditions and increased trips to the emergency room (*Pierre Thomas, et.al., ABCNews.com*).



\$73 billion is wasted annually in unnecessary healthcare expenditures due to low health literacy. Medicare and Medicaid finance more than 50% of these costs. (*National Academy on an Aging Society, 1999*)



People with a low level of literacy are more likely to be hospitalized... because physicians are concerned about patients' abilities to follow instructions and

care for themselves at home" (*Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D., Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*)

HEALTH AT HOME

GASTON LITERACY COUNCIL STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES

DECEMBER 2007

- ▶ 88% learned to read medicine labels
- ▶ 83% feel more comfortable talking to their doctor
- ▶ 100% learned new things about their bodies and health
- ▶ 96% learned ways to live a healthier lifestyle
- ▶ 92% learned about common health problems, symptoms, and treatments
- ▶ 100% learned about things that are harmful to their health that they should avoid
- ▶ 87% of ESL students reported that Health at Home saved them a trip to the ER

STUDENT COMMENTS ABOUT THINGS LEARNED IN CLASS:

- ▶ "...vegetables and fruits are good for your health. I learned about the digestive system, nutrients, and vitamins and what they do for your body."
- ▶ "The book (Health at Home) that Ms. Edwina gave to me, I study it almost every day and learn a lot of new things."
- ▶ "I think people should not smoke and not do anything harmful to your health and stay in shape."
- ▶ "I have learned to walk a lot, drink at least 8 glasses of water, and do breathing exercises."
- ▶ "That eating right is good for you."

Parents with low literacy levels often do not provide preventive care for their children.

(*Archives of Internal Medicine*)

