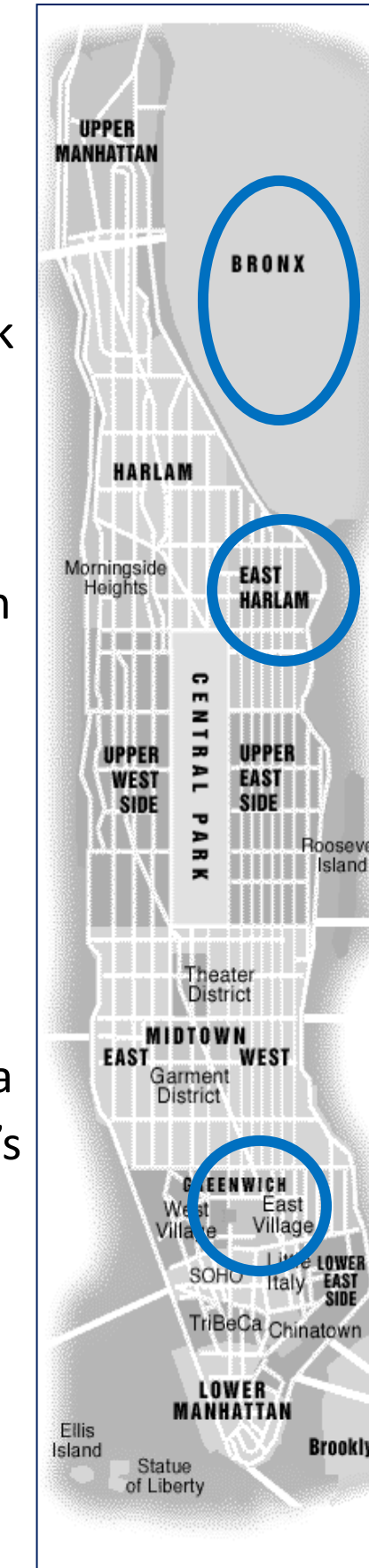# Electronic Health Record Facilitates Rapid Implementation of Health Literacy Assessment

Felicity Tsikiwa, LPN, Ross Hewitt, MD, Rebecca Green, LMSW, Virna Little, PsyD, LCSW-R, SAP

The Institute For Family Health, New York, NY

THE INSTITUTE FOR FAMILY HEALTH

Background

- The Institute for Family Health (IFH) is a federally-qualified community health care network serving over 80,000 patients at 26 locations through-out New York State. Many IFH patients come from low literacy communities such as East Harlem and the South Bronx.

- East Harlem is home to one of IFH's largest sites, The Family Health Center of Harlem (FHCH) In East Harlem, 17% of adults 25 and older never completed 8th grade, and another 16% never graduated from high school.

- In the Bronx, where IFH has multiple sites, 30% of people over 25 years of age never earned a High School diploma.

- Making informed health care decisions requires that patients comprehend the facts about their health and the choices in terms of care that they have.

- The "Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine-Short Form" (REALM-SF) is a validated assessment tool that can be used by clinicians to assess an individual's reading comprehension in a medical context. The 7-item validated word recognition test measures the degree to which individuals obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Introduction

- Patient's health literacy deficits impact their ability to receive health care information. Assessing patient literacy can lead to delivery of health care information at an appropriate level for patient comprehension. Furthermore, building unique patient health literacy information into the Electronic Health Record (EHR) using the REALM-SF tool can be an efficient and accessible utilization method for patient's care team members thus eliminating the patient's need to restate health literacy deficits at every encounter.

Goals

This project was conceptualized in four segments: the "Pre-pilot Phase", "Pilot Phase", "Introduction Phase", and the "Expansion Phase."

The first two phases were focused on HIV services only. The last two phases saw screening expand to patients regardless of their medical condition.

Aim 1: Raise staff awareness related to patient health literacy
- Identify IFH patient's health literacy levels

Aim 2: Make health literacy screening quick and easy for employees
- Embed the REALM-SF in EHR
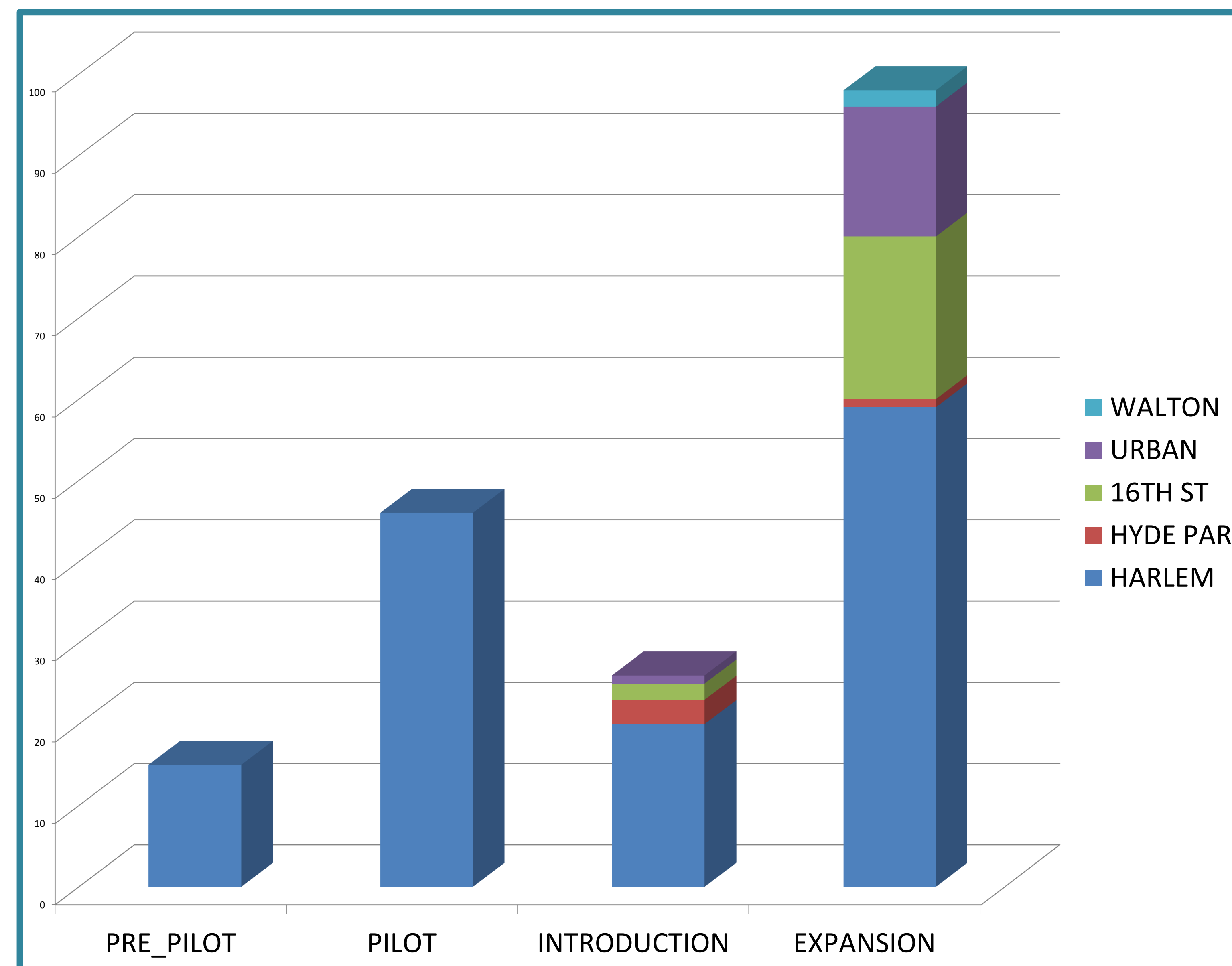
Participants (N=185)

- English speaking adult patients at:
  - The Family Health Center of Harlem
  - The Walton Family Health Center
  - Urban Horizons Health Center
  - Sidney Hillman and Phillips Family Practice (SHPFP)

Project Phases

Pre-Pilot Phase	Pilot Phase	Introduction Phase	Expansion Phase
July 2013 - August 2013	September 2013 - November 2013	December 2013 - January 2014	February 2014
FHCH	FHCH	FHCH Walton Urban SHPFP	FHCH Walton Urban SHPFP
HIV Medical Director tests the embedded REALM-SF in EHR	HIV direct care providers begin using REALM-SF in EHR	Direct Care Providers at multiple sites begin using embedded REALM-SF. Staff orientation to tool includes role play and webinars	Screening Incentivized with $20.00 gift certificate
15 Patients tested	46 Patients tested	26 Patients tested	98 Patients Tested

Results

Results

After introducing the embedded REALM-SF test into our EHR, orientation with role play, webinars, and offering incentives for testing, we have seen an increase of 25-30% use over baseline in 2014.
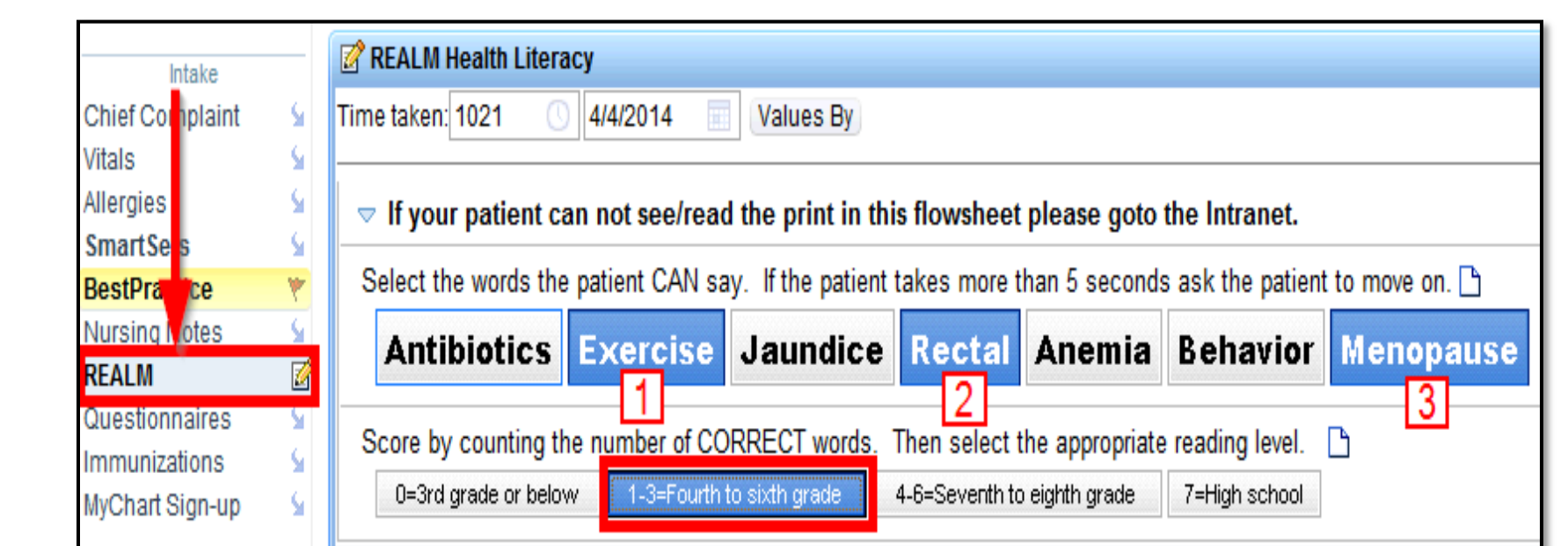
Implications for Practice

Sustaining high rates of health literacy assessment is difficult in busy out-patient settings. Utilizing the EHR and offering small incentives is an effective way to enhance use of assessment tool which leads to patients being better informed about their health conditions and options regarding healthcare decisons.
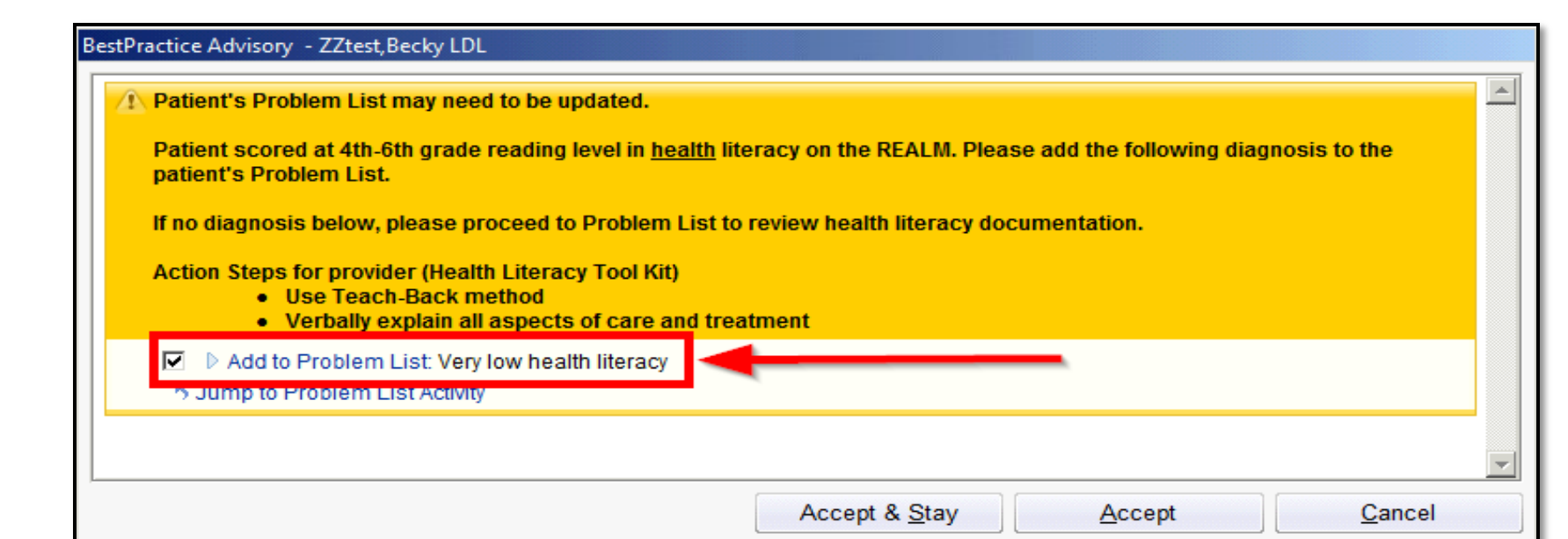
Future Directions

IFH's user friendly version of the embedded REALM-SF is being upgraded:

Easier to read views in the EHR

Tips for addressing health literacy deficits have been added

This question will be added to assess for health literacy deficits in languages other than English,

"Have you ever had trouble understanding health related documents?"