

A key component of health literacy: The interaction between the skills of individuals and the requirements and assumptions of health and social systems. (Institute of Medicine, 2010)

## What Is The Problem?

- ❖ Low Health Literacy is linked to poor health outcomes for patients.
- ❖ Little data is available regarding nurse skill level in addressing health literacy concerns.
- ❖ Even less data is available supporting educational initiatives for health literacy within health systems.

Health Literacy is a constellation of skills that influences how patients use information to make decisions about their health.

A large US Department of Education survey found that only 12% of individuals have proficient health literacy skills (2003). With so many patients affected, issues related to inadequate health literacy must be a high priority for the health system.

New healthcare legislation requires health systems to address health literacy needs of the patient and skills of the workforce.

Up to 80% of verbal instruction is forgotten immediately by the patient.

(Kessels, 2003)

## Why is this so important?

Increasing complexities in health care require us to focus on excellence in communication to keep patients safe. Improving nurses' skills in addressing health literacy issues benefits both the patient and the health system.

If our patients do not understand how to take care of themselves, then we have failed them as partners in their health



**Poor health literacy is the strongest predictor of a person's health.**  
(American Medical Association)

## What Did We Do?

In April 2013 we began educational classes for Registered Nurses in the health system.

- ⇒ Class design focuses on RN communication and how it relates to safety, satisfaction & understanding in inpatient care.
- ⇒ Subject matter enthusiasts deliver lecture content with integrated group exercises and video.
- ⇒ Nurse attendees practice communication skills through role play and discussion. Class time totals 3 hours.
- ⇒ The teach-back method is highlighted as the standard of care in nurse patient communication.

A 50 bed med-surg/telemetry unit was chosen as the pilot for measurement.



The classes were designed to enhance a growing culture of patient centered care and excellence in communication. Combined with health system efforts to address health literacy needs, a culture of great communication is emerging.

## What Were Our Results?

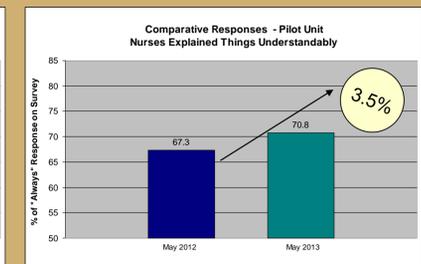
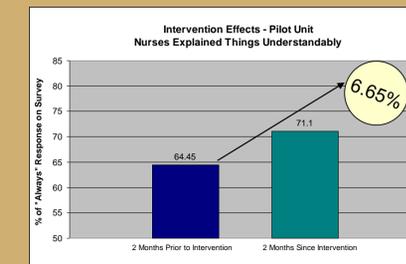
Most nurses reported knowing very little about health literacy prior to the class. Many stated they had heard of teach-back, but did not regularly practice it.

Nurses who attended had the following comments:

- ❖ "Role plays and case studies were excellent"
- ❖ "This is very helpful"
- ❖ "Informative and fun!"
- ❖ "Thank you! This reminded me why I became a nurse!"



PinnacleHealth uses the HCAHPS reporting survey to measure patient satisfaction.



The survey responses for the months following intervention show a positive shift in scores.

Improving staff knowledge on health literacy has the opportunity to positively impact patient care.

Want a guide on how to make your organization more health literate? Read the *Institute of Medicine's* Discussion Paper - **Attributes of a Health Literate Organization (2012)**

For a practical guide on health literate changes, check out the *AHRQ's* **Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit**

