

Designing for Health Literacy: Lessons Learned from the Southern New Hampshire Health Website Redesign

CommunicateHealth, Inc: Rachel Pryzby MPH, CHES • Mareika Phillips • Xanthi Scrimgeour, MEd, MCHES

Southern New Hampshire Health: Jackie Clancy

Background

CommunicateHealth, Inc. worked with Southern New Hampshire Health (SNHH) — a regional health system encompassing over 70 practices — to redesign their website according to health literacy best practices. The overarching project goal was to make it easier for consumers to find health care information online and ultimately access services.

Methods

The SNHH site was developed through a **user-centered design** process. User-centered design is a method that involves users as co-creators in every step of the design process.

An **online survey** (n=204) and **in-depth interviews** (n=6) with SNHH staff and stakeholder gave us insights on what worked and didn't work for professionals who use the website in their jobs.

In **focus groups** with health care consumers (n=22), we learned which content was most important for consumers, along with their desired visual tone.

Through **baseline usability testing** with health care consumers (n=5), the team observed first-hand where users had trouble navigating the site.

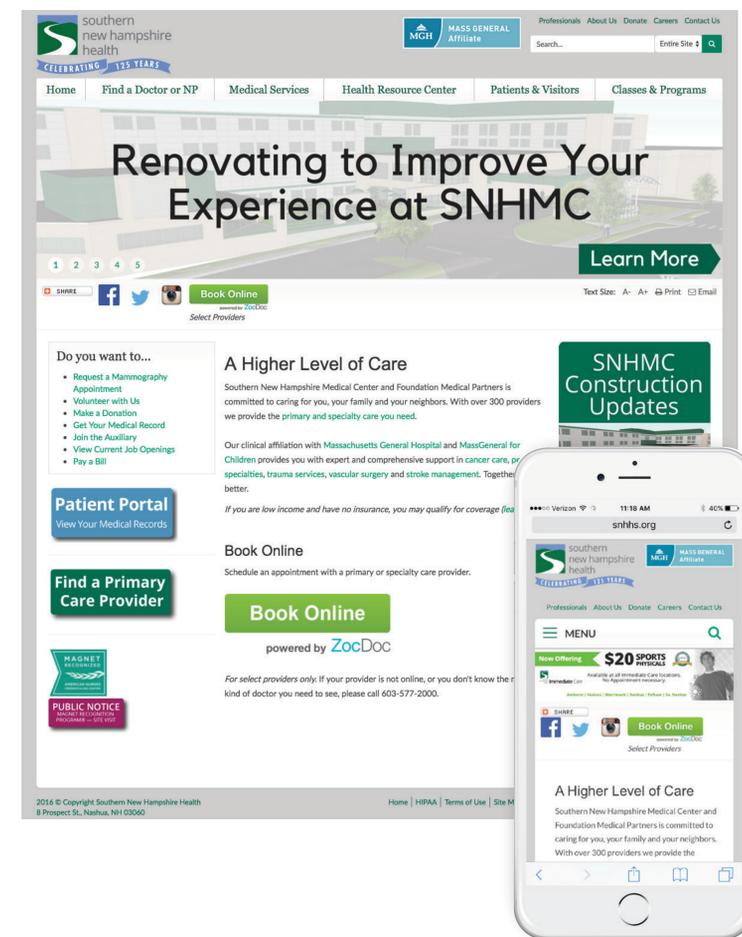
By developing **personas**, we distilled what we learned and kept key user groups and tasks top-of-mind.

In **click testing** (n=46), we tested a new information architecture and design to make sure that the organization, labeling, and look and feel made sense to consumers.

Post-launch usability testing with health care consumers (n=8) allowed us to observe users navigating the live site so that we could make final tweaks based on their insights.

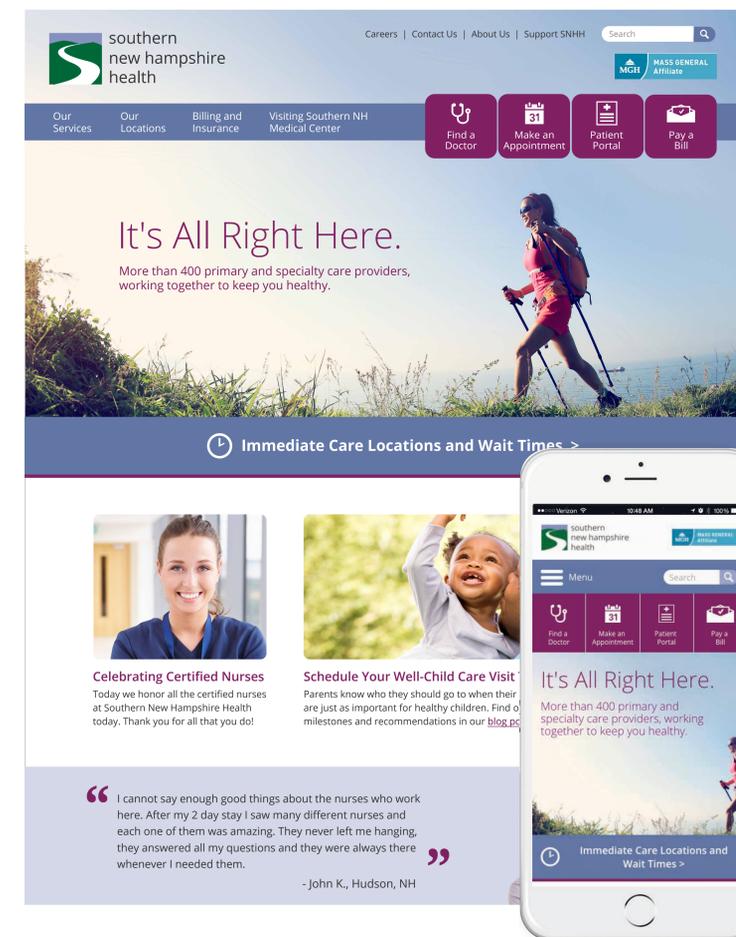
Before

Previous look and organization of SNHH site



After

Updated look and organization of SNHH site



www.snhhealth.org

Findings

The health care consumers we spoke with desired a health system site that lets them do what they need to do quickly and easily. After redesigning the site according to health literacy best practices, research participants were more likely to be able to:

- Access a patient portal
- Pay a bill
- Find information about health classes and programs
- Locate a pre-registration page

Lessons Learned

Many web users — and particularly those with limited health literacy skills — have trouble completing basic tasks online. When designing a health system website, it's essential to design with health literacy in mind to ensure that all users can complete core site tasks with ease.

- Prominent quick link buttons** are effective in connecting users to the most important site tasks, like finding a doctor or paying a bill
- A **friendly and welcome look and feel** on the site resonates with users
- Strategic use of color** on buttons and links helps indicate actionability without inducing stress
- Clear labels and reduced clutter** help users feel confident that they're able to find the information they need
- Health system sites must be **responsive** and fully functional on smaller devices

"I like that everything is right there. I know where to find it. I don't have to go digging through. Some sites you have to dig through to find where to go to pay a bill or things like that. So having it right at the top is convenient."

"...I can manage my own healthcare more from my own home... I don't want to be sitting on my phone trying to get through to make an appointment or anything. I like being able to do it myself."

"I like the picture. It makes you feel warm and cozy, like you're a part of it."