Health Literacy Assessment

Completing the health literacy module was very eye opening to me. Initially, when I calculated the SMOG reading grade level for my educational brochure, it was at a 12th grade reading level! Clearly, changes needed to be made. After reading through the material and listening to the voicethreads, I realized that several key changes could be made. I had way too much medical terminology throughout the brochure. I realized that while disease statistics and anatomical terms are important to me, they are not as important (or understandable) to my audience. I went back through the brochure and took out words such as “anterior” and “degenerative pathology”, or I made a note of the term in lay man’s words. Further, I changed the names of some of the exercises. For example, I switched “Quadruped External Rotation” to “Fire Hydrant”.

I also saw that the brochure was way too busy; I had too many paragraphs, and not enough white space and bullets. After realizing this, I rearranged a lot of the text so that I used bulleted lists throughout the brochure. I tried to use shorter, concise words. I had some difficulty choosing which exercises I wanted to incorporate into the brochure. But after reading through the health literacy material, I realized that I should try and keep it to just the 3 most important exercises, in hopes that these simple, repetitive exercises will be easily understood and will increase adherence.

Initially, I underestimated the important of pictures. I was always going to include pictures of the exercises, but completing the module made me realize that the reader may get more from pictures than from the text. Initially, I only had 1 picture for each exercise. I went back in and added “start” and “end” pictures, and also added in some pictures showing common mistakes, or poor technique. I formatted the font of pictures showing the correct technique in green, and I put the font showing the incorrect technique in red. I think these changes will allow the reader to follow along with the exercises more easily.

After making the above changes, the material is currently at a SMOG 9th grade reading level. I realize this is still well above the 4th/5th grade suggested reading level that it should be at. However, I feel that it is being ranked at a higher grade level due to the frequency of words such as “strengthening”, “exercise”, “adolescence”, and “prevention”. After discussing this with my advisor and committee members, it was decided that the use of these words would be kept in the brochure, as removing them would take away from provided information and the overall message of the brochure.