Health Literacy

Health literacy is an important topic in the medical field. It is important to assess whether patients understand instructions but also to determine if educational materials are appropriate for certain patients. Because I developed a few patient education materials as part of my capstone, assessing health literacy was a vital part of my project.

I will begin with the parent brochure outlining healthy weight and physical activity for children with disabilities. My first approach at assessing health literacy of this brochure was to use a checklist approach in which I looked at the overall organization and appearance. Next I determined if the writing style was appropriate and easy to follow. It was then that I submitted the brochure for review by my advisor and committee members. A few suggestions made at this point were to change the font to a more non-serif type and change the flow so that it was easier to follow. Ultimately, I used the Microsoft Word spelling and grammar review option to assess readability. This feature allowed me to determine that the brochure is at a 6th grade reading level with a 70.4/100 score for reading ease. I found this appropriate for the target audience as approximately 36% of adults have a basic or below basic level of health literacy (approximately at an 8th grade level).1

The community resource guide was a little more complicated as this was developed for both clinicians and can be given to parents as well. Originally, I designed this to be organized in a bulleted list; however, the formatting made the document hard to follow and confusing. I redesigned the guide into a table to make it easier to read and added shading to separate the different organizations included in the list. Ultimately, this resource is still at a higher reading level than I would like (12th grade according to Microsoft Word), it is still an appropriate resource for clinicians and can help point parents in the right direction.

References:

1. Mostrom, E. Chapter 12: Patient Education and Health Literacy. In: Jensen GM, Mostrom E. (eds). Handbook of Teaching for Physical Therapists. 3rd ed. St. Louis, Mo. Elsevier/Butterworth-Heinemann. 2013.