The issue of health literacy is important for me to consider as I prepare materials for my Capstone presentation in Guatemala. While my audience will include physical therapists, physical therapy techs, and physical therapy students at Las Obras, I predict my most significant concern related to health literacy will be my inability to speak Spanish.1 Thankfully, there will be a verbal translator present during my Power Point presentation and for my lab activities. Speaking slowly and purposefully during my presentation will allow the translator to better understand me while also proving him/her with adequate time to translate my words into Spanish. Additionally, all of my handouts and copies of my slides will be translated into Spanish prior to leaving for Guatemala. I plan to utilize a reliable translator per the recommendations of my Capstone advisor (Lisa Johnston), which will ensure that the translated information is accurate and appropriate.

While the education level of PTs and PT techs in Guatemala is significantly higher than the general public, I will keep in mind potential health literacy differences between American and Guatemalan PTs that may be present and adjust my presentation accordingly.1 Using a lower reading level in both my presentation and handout materials will facilitate a greater depth of understanding, and will reduce the risk of participants misinterpreting information. At this time, I am still generating handout materials; however, based on the language used in the rough draft of my Power Point presentation, the Flesch-Kincaid reading level is **14** (average).2 Some slides have medical terminology (i.e. precautions/red flags for exercise) that is at a higher reading level. Therefore, I may discuss with my advisor the appropriateness of changing terminology without leaving out important information. Upon completion of all of my handouts and final draft of my Power Point, I will perform an additional readability test in order to ensure an appropriate reading level prior to translation into Spanish.2

Following my presentation, I plan to have all audience members participate in a lab activity, which will further help me gauge their understanding of the materials presented. A handout for the lab activity will include a decision tree for determining a patient’s appropriateness to begin and continue participating in exercise. On the second page of this handout, I also plan to explain blood pressure measurement, heart rate monitoring, and utilizing the 6-minute walk test and 6-minute wheelchair push test. Therapists will also receive a “Rate of Perceived Exertion Reference Card” for quick reference during activity. My handout and the RPE card will consist of short, relevant sentences as well as appropriate, culturally sensitive pictures to facilitate understanding.3 I am hopeful that these materials will be used as a reference for the therapists in the future.

As the trip nears, I will look towards Lisa for constructive feedback for developing my existing materials into a complete Capstone project. I plan to give myself adequate time to have all of my materials translated in order to enable audience understand. I am looking forward to learning more about Guatemalan culture and healthcare delivery as I prepare for the trip, which may also help facilitate the creation of audience-appropriate presentation components.

References:

1. Edwards N, Errickson S. Introduction to Health and Disability in Guatemala. [Powerpoint]. UNC-CH: Doctorate of Physical Therapy Program; 2013. Available at: https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/c9a730af-8b7f-4258-a24f-68967ce979f4/page/e66dc23f-85cb-4139-93e6-db0868a9c64a. Accessed February 25, 2015.
2. Readability Score. Readability-Score.com Web site. Available at: https://readability-score.com/. Accessed March 5, 2015.
3. McCulloch K, DeWalt D, Pignone M. Health literacy 101: defining the problem and what we can do about it. [PowerPoint and Voicethread]. Available at: https://unc.voicethread.com/myvoice/#q.b984634. Accessed March 5, 2015.