



PinnacleHealth

# Paving the Way For Health Literacy: Meet Ima Littleoff

Christina Dietman, BSN, RN-BC and Katie Shradley, BS, RN-CVRN



PinnacleHealth

## What is Health Literacy?

- The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. (Ratzan and Parker, 2000)
- A constellation of skills required to function in the health care environment (The American Medical Association)
- Health Literacy varies by context and setting; is not correlated with education level. A low functional health literacy compromises patients' health and increases the risk of adverse outcomes

### Health Literacy is not pretty.

*It does not earn a paycheck or bring in revenue.*

*It is not at the forefront of technological advances.*

*It does not require new language or new research.*

**So how do you get anyone to pay attention?**

## Statistically Speaking

### 36% of all adults in the US have limited health literacy

- 66 % of U.S adults age 60 and over have inadequate or marginal literacy skills.
- 50% of welfare recipients read below fifth-grade level
- Written patient education materials average a ninth grade reading level. Current recommendations are that all education material be presented at a sixth grade reading level or below
- Studies show that patients comprehend as little as 50% of what they are told by physicians
- Up to 80% of patients forget what their doctor has said, as soon as they leave the doctor's office.



*... Which means that nearly 50% of all adults may have problems understanding prescriptions, appointment slips, informed consent documents, insurance forms and health education materials.*

(NAAL, 2003)

## Meet Ima Littleoff



*I'm so glad to be helping health care providers learn that what they say, and how they say it- truly matters!*

To date, Ima has shared her experience and wisdom with over 300 nursing professionals. She looks forward to each meeting and enjoys sharing her stories!

Friend's say she's a hoot!

■ Ima is an exciting octogenarian who, like millions of others, struggles to navigate the healthcare system.

■ Ima invites audience members to share in appointments with Ima's favorite nurse practitioner. Here she helps demonstrate that effective communication is a critical aspect of safe, quality patient care.

■ She teaches that that creative educational methods can have positive results for engaging staff in best-practice methods.

■ Ima wants people understand that language access remains a matter of national importance. At the heart of her efforts, Ima wants to engage providers in great conversation about the care they provide.

*Ima makes health literacy fun and interactive. She brings health literacy to life with funny antics and exaggerations. She reminds us all that communication is a real issue, and inspires us to speak clearly for the safety of our patients!*

## Ima's Thoughts on Good Care

Ima agrees with the Joint Commission, and hopes that providers will improve communication by learning more about:

- Always using plain language
- Limiting information provided to two or three important points at a time
- Using drawings, models or devices to demonstrate points
- Encouraging patients to ask questions
- Actively listening to patients at every visit

Ima also recommends that all providers utilize the *Teach-Back* method for patient education.

Providers should ask patients to repeat-back what they know or understand, in their own words. This is not to be a test of the patient's knowledge, but instead a test of how well you have explained a concept.

*"Hyper, hyper...tension?"*

*Oh honey, I'm not hyper! I can barely stay awake!"*

*~Ima*

**Health Literacy is the STRONGEST predictor of health status.**  
*American Medical Association*

*Safety and quality preempt every advancement we make in medicine. Without good patient engagement, our medical technology will never reach its full potential.*

*We must engage our patients as partners, speak in common language and be sure our message is heard.*

**We have got to pay attention.**

"Like" Ima on Facebook!

