

Illiteracy & Healthcare

Healthcare marketing professionals need to account for the illiteracy of the general public and specific targeted clusters. The five following illiteracy statistics are alarming and should have a major impact on how healthcare marketeers go about their trade. The data suggests that radio might be the best communication medium to use in reaching out to certain population clusters.

1. About 21% of adults, or 40 million to 44 million people, are functionally illiterate, reading at or below a fifth grade level.
2. Another 25% of adults, another 50 million people, are only marginally literate, meaning they cannot understand, interpret and apply written material to accomplish daily tasks.
3. More than 40% of chronically ill Americans are functionally illiterate.
4. More than 66% of people older than 60 have inadequate or marginal literacy skills.
5. Low literacy patients are 52% more likely to be hospitalized than those with adequate literacy skills.

In addition, it might very well explain the low response rate with patient satisfaction questionnaires, a patient's inability to comply with written instructions, and patient induced medical errors. Determining the overall literacy of your target audience is critical to your marketing effectiveness.

Sources: Department of Education & Center for Health Care Strategies Inc.

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