

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/project-oncology/improving-health-literacy-to-empower-adolescents-with-sickle-cell-disease/35927/>

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Improving Health Literacy to Empower Adolescents With Sickle Cell Disease

Announcer:

You're listening to *Project Oncology* on ReachMD. On this episode, we'll hear from Dr. Nidhi Bhatt, who will be discussing health literacy in patients with sickle cell disease. Dr. Bhatt works in the Department of Hematology at St. Jude Children's Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee.

Here she is now.

Dr. Bhatt:

Health literacy is the ability of an individual to obtain, understand, and use health information to make an informed decision about their health. We have a lot of studies stating that health literacy affects health outcomes, which is true for our sickle cell disease patients as well. So there are over a hundred thousand sickle cell disease patients in the US, and health literacy influences many of the overall health outcomes. The one that I focus on is the transition from pediatric care to adult care, so specifically addressing adolescents in sickle cell disease.

We do a lot of preventive care, but we also want to instill good habits in our patients. We want to teach them about reading insurance cards, making sure they know how to make their appointments, making sure they know how to reach out to their physician, making sure when they're at college they don't lose sight of making sure that their health is taken care of while they're trying to get an education.

There are many ways to assess a person's health literacy. There are many validated tools that are available. The one that has been used in sickle cell disease population, which is published, is something called the Newest Vital Sign, and this is a tool that specifically looks at reading, comprehension, mathematics. And it's a six-question tool based on a nutrition label, and each correct answer corresponds to one score point. Six is the highest points you can get. So a four to six score will attest to an adequate health literacy; the lower the score, the higher likelihood of having limited health literacy. So it's a very simple tool. It takes only a few minutes for the participants and the patients to do it, and it gives us good information about their reading, mathematics, and comprehension ability.

We want to make educational material that is going to be patient-friendly, so we need to have less medical jargon. We need to have less of the very technical words. We need to have things that are relatable, so having patient stories and things like that. I think those are much more relatable to the patients and something that is easily digestible and easily understandable.

You also want to include a sort of multidisciplinary approach, even when you're creating educational material. Once you create something with the help of physicians, nurses, educators, and communication specialists, then you want to take it back to the patient and say, hey, does this actually make sense? Does this actually answer the questions that you have about your disease, the questions that you have about your management, the questions that you had about specific medications and the side effects and things like that? So you want to take it back to the patient and then have a reiterative process to improve that education material before you're ready to send it to the masses.

Announcer:

That was Dr. Nidhi Bhatt talking about how we can support the health literacy of patients with sickle cell disease. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *Project Oncology* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!