



# Health Literacy & Patient and Family Engagement

- Limitations in health literacy can be common among vulnerable populations, including minorities, elderly, low income and English as a second language.
- Most people do not have formal medical education and training and will have less understanding of medical terms, treatments, and medications. Challenges to health literacy are further exacerbated by:
  - Language barriers
  - Limited education/literacy
  - Cultural beliefs
  - Poorly designed medical materials (difficult to interpret/understand)
  - Poor communication with caregivers
- **Steps to improving health literacy:**
  - Assess patient's and/or caregiver's health literacy early on in the relationship
  - Meet the patient/caregiver "where they are"
    - Partner with the community you are trying to reach in the problem solving process
    - Build solutions that reflect the capabilities and needs of the patients/caregivers you are working with
  - Assess your hospital's demographics to understand more precisely who the patient population is and engage with them to best understand their needs
  - Provide staff with materials to educate and guide communication with patients/caregivers with health literacy barriers, including the teach back method
  - Inform caregivers about their options to get involved in the early stages of care
  - Designate staff to work on advancing health literacy programs and support patients struggling with health literacy

## **Communities of Practice Resources:**

**General Master Class Resources:** <http://www.healthcarecommunities.org/ResourceCenter.aspx?CategoryId=42122>

**Resource Guide:** <http://www.healthcarecommunities.org/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?portalid=3&EntryId=77888>