

Health Literacy in Ireland

May 26th 2011

Waterford Literacy Link
Breakfast Seminar



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthadta do Aosaigh

What is NALA ?

Established in 1980. NALA is a non-profit, voluntary organisation.

Membership is open to all adults.

Funded by the Department of Education. For specific projects we receive funding from FAS, Department of Social and Family Affairs and HSE.

NALA's Role

- Policy
- Research
- Training
- Mainstreaming
- Promotion & Awareness

New Literacy TV series - Monday nights

First programme 16th May 280,000 viewers

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'A Story With Me In It' website. The browser window title is 'A Story With Me In It - Home - Windows Internet Explorer'. The address bar shows 'http://www.astorywithme.ie/'. The website features a navigation menu with 'Home', 'About', 'Submit your story', 'Writing tips', 'Stories', and 'Need help?'. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area highlights a story by Eileen Sheehan, with a photo of two women and a 'read more' button. Below this, there are sections for 'Welcome', 'Latest stories posted', and 'Most read stories'. The 'Welcome' section includes a call to action: 'Do you have a story to tell - why not share it here?'. The 'Browse stories by theme' section lists categories: Achievement, Family and friends, Funny Stories, and Kindness. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows several open applications, including Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft PowerPoint, and the website itself.



Definition of Adult Literacy

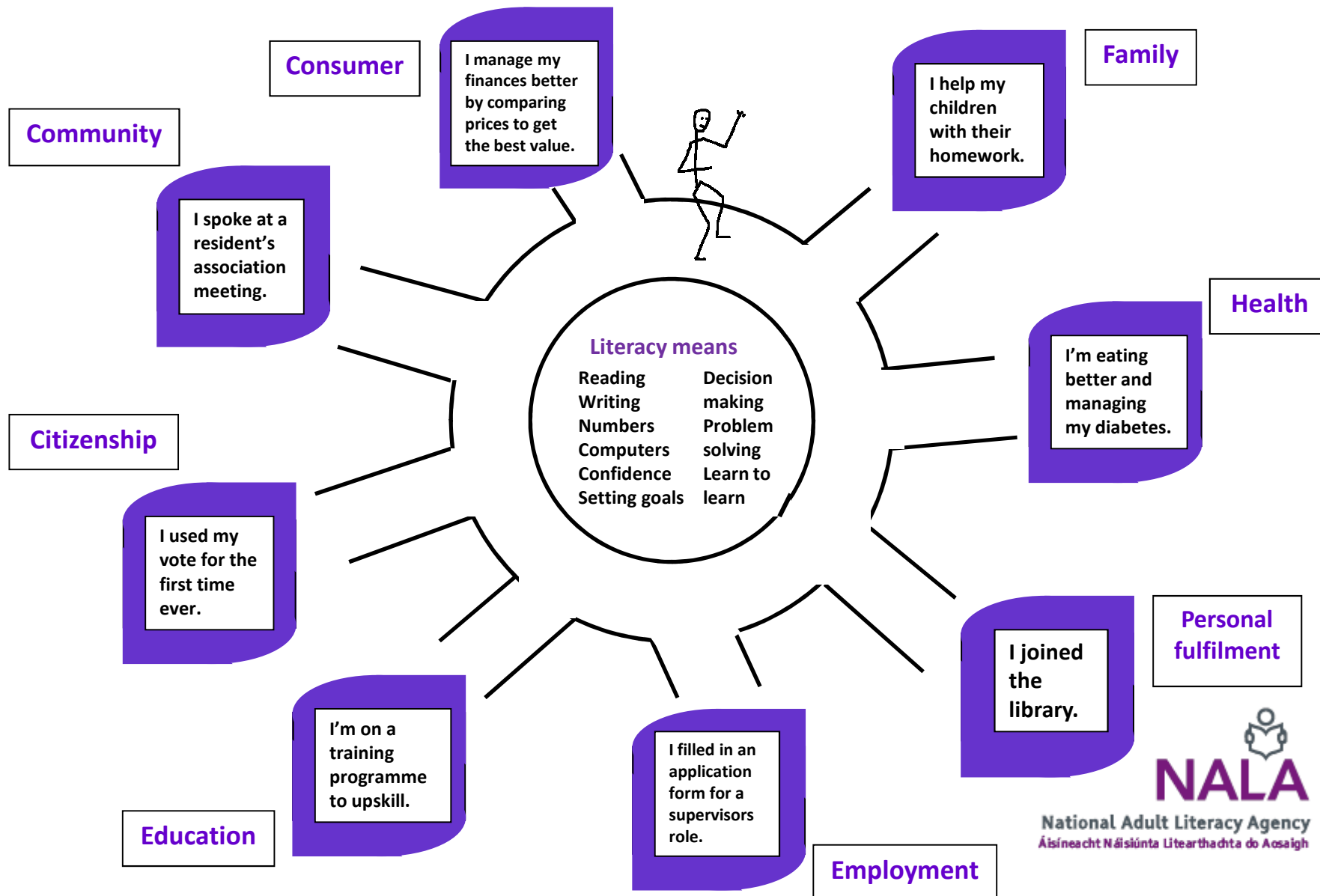
- Literacy involves listening and speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday technology to communicate and handle information.
- It includes more than the technical skills of communication (reading, writing and maths): it also has personal, social and economic dimensions.

Realising potential

Literacy and numeracy: essential lifelong learning throughout life events



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Adult Literacy Tuition in Ireland

In 2010

45,000 Irish adults are attending literacy classes through the 33 Vocational Education Committees.

4,000 volunteer literacy tutors

1,500 paid tutors.

Literacy Levels in Ireland

- OECD International Adult Literacy Survey (1997).
- Based on a 5 level sliding scale with Level 5 representing very good functional literacy skills. Level 3 was considered the minimum level needed. Survey analysed range of everyday material such as bus timetable and text on packet of Aspirin.

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Aspirin question in IALS

SAMPLE TEXT OF PROSE LITERACY, LEVEL 1

ASPIRIN 500

INDICATIONS: Headaches, muscle pains, rheumatic pains, toothaches, earaches.

RELIEVES COMMON COLD SYMPTOMS.

DOSAGE: ORAL. 1 or 2 tablets every 6 hours, preferably accompanied by food, for not longer than 7 days. Store in a cool, dry place.

CAUTION: Do not use for gastritis or peptic ulcer. Do not use if taking anticoagulant drugs. Do not use for serious liver illness or bronchial asthma. If taken in large doses and for an extended period, may cause harm to kidneys. Before using this medication for chicken pox or influenza in children, consult with a doctor about Reyes Syndrome, a rare but serious illness. During lactation and pregnancy, consult with a doctor before using this product, especially in the last trimester of pregnancy. If symptoms persist, or in case of an accidental overdose, consult a doctor. Keep out of reach of children.

INGREDIENTS: Each tablet contains

500 mg acetylsalicylic acid.

Excipient c.b.p. 1 tablet

Reg. No. 88246

Above is an example of one of the tasks at level 1, where respondents were asked to look at the directions on a bottle of aspirin to find out the maximum number of days a person should take this medicine.

SOURCE: Education 2000, IALS Results for Ireland 1997



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Irish Results

- 25% of the Irish population has weak literacy skills Level 1.
- A further 30% scored at Level 2
- Age a factor - 44% of people aged 55-65 scored at Level 1 compared to 17% of people 16-25.
- Shows that society is demanding more from individuals- literacy “bar” being raised constantly.
- Lifestyle issues- use of TV, books, library

Numeracy Results

- Again 25% of adults could not answer correctly the simplest of numerical questions.
- Over 40% of these respondents were aged 56-65.
- Numeracy in healthcare– Risk, probability, likelihood, norm.



Latest literacy results



- 2009 OECD findings for 15-18 year olds
- 25% of 15 year olds are functionally illiterate.
- On reading levels Ireland has dropped from 5th to 17th place, the sharpest decline among 39 countries.

Reasons

- Overburdened and over general curriculum.
- Unspecified literacy curriculum
- Teacher support
- Family commitment



Better Literacy and Numeracy for Children and Young People

A Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools



NOVEMBER 2010

S. B. O'LEARY DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS AGUS SOILEANNA EDUCATION
AND SKILLS



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What is Health Literacy?



INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE
OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

Definition

- Most relevant definition for NALA supplied by the USA IOM and the Dept of Health and Human Services.

“Health literacy emerges when the expectations, preferences and skills of individuals seeking health information and services meet the expectations, preferences and skills of those providing information and services.”

What is health literacy cont...

- New kind of literacy with specific language, similar to other new literacies such as financial literacy.
- Will affect everyone at some stage.
- However more likely to impact on some groups including older people who are more likely to suffer from chronic conditions.

USA research

- Less likely to engage in screening and preventive programmes.
- Less likely to have chronic disease under control.
- More likely to be hospitalised.
- More likely to report poor health.
- More likely to report for treatment at a later stage.

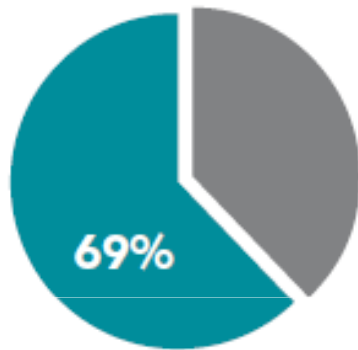
Signs to look for

- Routinely miss appointments
- Arrive without completed forms
- Avoid filling out forms
- Never refer to written materials
- Claim to have written problems when asked to read.

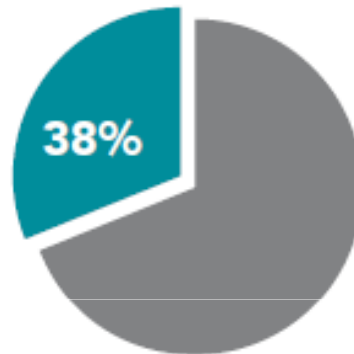
Irish Health Literacy findings

- No quantitative research but 2002 Dept commissioned Health Literacy Strategy and Policy Report. 78 adults described how people could run into trouble in Irish health service.
- 1,000 GP questionnaire (MSD, 2009)

Irish GPs – MSD research



69% of GPs were not aware that almost 50% of the Irish population have low literacy skills.



38% had not received training associated with patient communication skills.



21% cited lack of education/literacy skills among patients as the greatest barrier to successful communication.

Future Surveys - Future Results

1. Ireland taking part in the first European health literacy survey.
2. Updated OECD Adult Literacy Survey – PIAAC 2011, results in 2013.



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Government response in Ireland



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

- Since 2002 NALA has developed health literacy initiatives. This work has been funded by the Health Promotion Unit and HSE.
- Research
- Training of staff
- Teaching materials
- HL Awareness tools

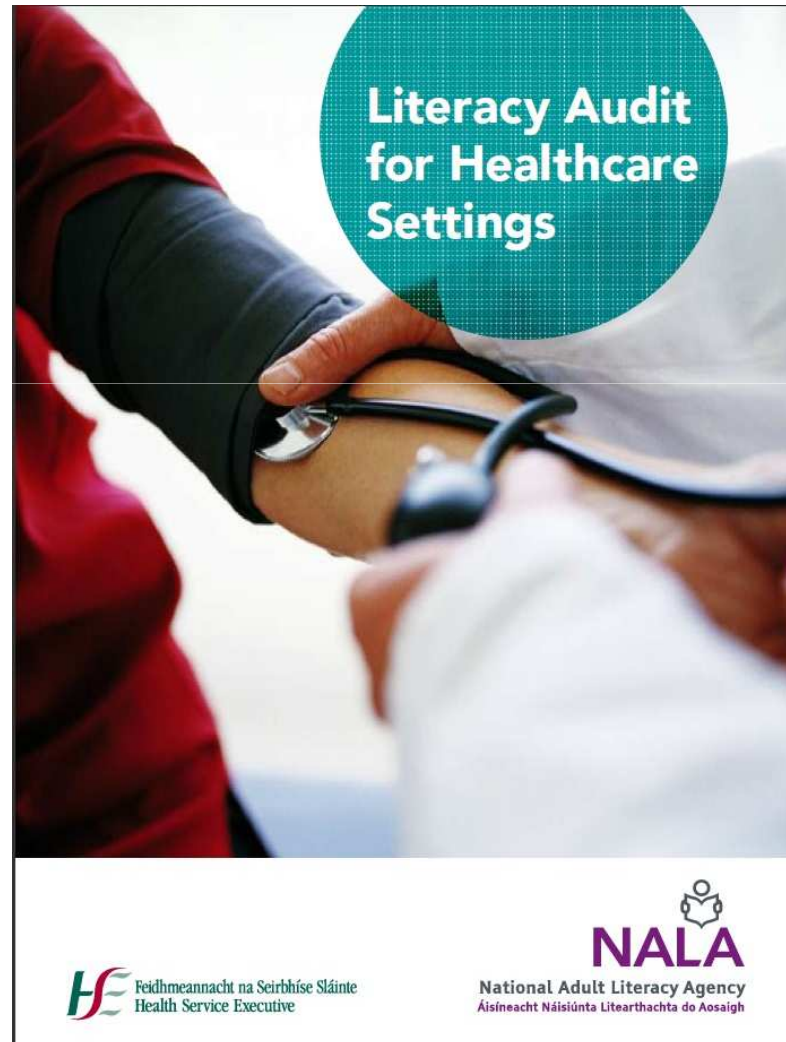


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Objectives of the Irish Health Literacy programme

- Develop understanding of HL issue amongst key health stakeholders
- Share best practice across the healthcare sector – highlight and support good practice.
- Development of government debate and policy in the area

Health Literacy Tools (2009)



Is Our Pharmacy Meeting Patients' Needs? A Pharmacy Health Literacy Assessment Tool User's Guide



Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

New Partnership MSD 2007/2011



MSD/NALA Partnership 2007/2011

- 2007 First national health literacy omnibus questionnaire was undertaken by Landsdowne Market Research.
- Crystal Clear Awards commenced in 2008
- Health literacy website www.healthliteracy.ie - 2009
- Health Audit report - 2010

Health Sector WorkersHealth Literacy | Health Literacy - Windows Internet Explorer

http://healthliteracy.ie/health-sector-worker/

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healthliteracy.ie

search

What is Health Literacy? General Public **Health Sector Workers** Academics Crystal Clear Awards Media Events



Impact Of Literacy Difficulties

Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards

Useful Resources

Useful Links

Health Sector Workers

People working in the healthcare sector play an important part in improving health literacy by communicating more clearly and making information more accessible to patients.

Research suggests that people with low health literacy:

- make more mistakes with medication or treatment,
- are less able to follow treatment instructions,
- lack the skills needed to negotiate the healthcare system, and
- are more likely to be hospitalised than people with adequate literacy skills.

NALA has developed the following 'top tips' for health professionals to follow when communicating with patients:

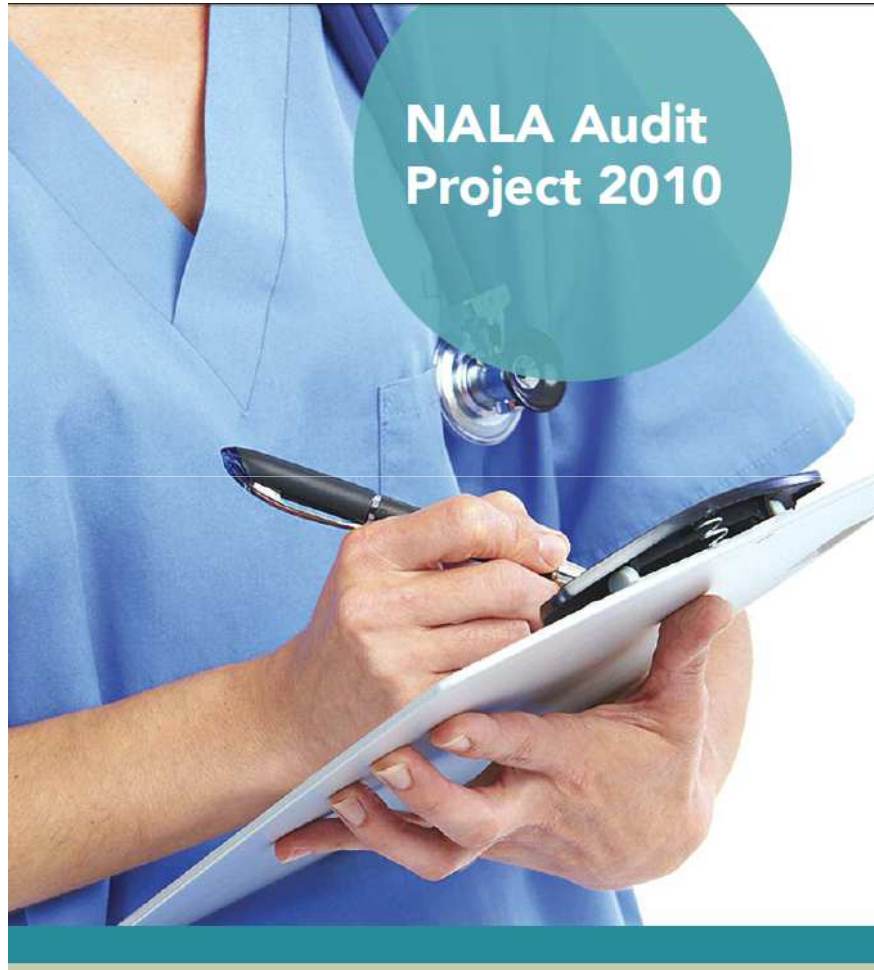
1. **Avoid medical jargon – use plain English instead.**
2. **Use images or visual aids where possible.**
3. **Use the 'teach back method' – ask the patient to repeat what you have told them in their own words to make sure they understand.**

Print Page | Email This Link

Start | Inbox - Microsoft Outlook | RE: Mins of May Access ... | Minutes_Access_Team... | Health 2011 | Microsoft PowerPoint - [...] | Health Sector Worker...

Internet | 150% | 12:23

2010 HL Audit Report



Positive findings from focus groups

- “I went for a breast check and they had diagrams ... showed how to look for a lump which was quite good because sometimes it’s hard for people. I think they are taking it on board that people need more help.” – woman 50s

Role of pharmacists

- “The chemist is very good, I find them very helpful. I’d go into the chemist first.” – *woman 30s*
- “Sometimes they are better than the doctor ... *woman 60s*

Other interesting quotes

- “There’s something about putting the onus on the patient to ask the questions. I think it should be the other way round – it should be up to the medical people to ask if we have questions rather than you sitting saying will I ever get the chance to ask. Not even **have** you any questions but **what** are your questions.” – woman 40s.

“As soon as I go into a hospital I go blind
and deaf.... *Woman 40s*

“Doctors need to talk and explain things
about health in lay man’s language”
woman late 50s

Dec 2010 Training for health practitioners www.healthliteracy.com

The screenshot shows the website for Health Literacy Consulting. The browser window title is "Health Literacy - Helen Osborne - Windows Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://www.healthliteracy.com/". The website header includes the logo "Health Literacy Consulting" with the tagline "Helping organizations communicate in ways people can understand." and a search bar. Navigation links for "Store", "About Us", and "Contact Us" are visible. A large graphic of a stethoscope and a pencil is featured. A sidebar on the right contains icons for "Workshops", "Writing & Editing", "Articles", "Books", "Podcasts", "How-To Tips", "Success Kit", and "Newsletter". The main content area features a portrait of Helen Osborne, a list of resources, a testimonial from Jill Shuman, and contact information.

Health Literacy Consulting
Helping organizations communicate in ways people can understand.

Search Site

Store About Us Contact Us

Health Literacy Consulting helps organizations communicate health information in ways that patients, families, and employees can understand. Resources include:

- [Free monthly e-newsletter](#)
- [Workshops and keynote presentations](#)
- [Plain language writing and editing services](#)
- [Health literacy tips, articles, books, and audio CDs](#)
- [Health Literacy Month website](#)
- [Health Literacy Out Loud podcasts](#)

Helen Osborne can help you communicate clearly!
Email Helen at helen@healthliteracy.com or call [508-653-1199](tel:508-653-1199).

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Helen Osborne, M.Ed., OTR/L is the founder and president of Health Literacy Consulting based in Natick, Massachusetts. She is also the producer and host of the podcast series, *Health Literacy Out Loud*. In addition, Helen is the founder of Health Literacy Month – a worldwide campaign to raise awareness about the importance of understandable health information.

Recognized as a health literacy expert, Helen brings clinical experience, educational training, and patient perspective to all her work. Helen's award-winning book, *Health Literacy from A to Z: Practical Ways to Communicate Your Health Message* is considered by many as the most important health literacy reference today.

"Helen helps you think about what you're trying to say so you can frame it in the most simple, yet engaging, way. Not only is she incredibly knowledgeable, but she's also a marvelous instructor."
Jill Shuman, Instructor
Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston MA

Helen Osborne can help you communicate clearly!
Email Helen at helen@healthliteracy.com or call [508-653-1199](tel:508-653-1199).

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Start | Inbox - Microsoft Outlook | RE: Mins of May Access ... | Minutes_Access_Team... | Health 2011 | Microsoft PowerPoint - [... | Health Literacy - Hele... | Internet | 125% | 12:30

Future - What Needs to Happen?

- European Health Literacy **Survey**- results in 2011.
- Irish **research** to provide Irish solutions. Look at the literacy demands of Irish healthcare settings.
- HL **integrated** into all national health campaigns and screening projects.
- HL integrated into **training** at undergraduate level for range of practitioners

What Needs to Happen (cont)

- Communication standards developed in healthcare. Hope to link the NALA/HSE Audit into Irish healthcare **accreditation** (HIQA). Reward good practice.
- National **awareness** campaign amongst public – hidden problem.

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www.nala.ie

www.healthliteracy.ie