

Title: Supporting the health care professionals in evaluating the quality of health educational materials for patients as a new task for medical librarians in Poland

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Background: Patient education, especially given in written form, should be an integral part of any healthcare services. It is known, that education could reduce patients' anxiety [1], increase their knowledge, improve satisfaction, psychological outcomes, adherence to treatment and disease self management [2]. Especially information given in written forms is considered to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of patient teaching, as patients tend to forget information, that is provided verbally.[3] There are several factors which need to be considered, when providing (evaluating) the written health education. To achieve its aims, patient education material should be readable, understandable, should be based on scientific foundation and realistic and current. [4]. The health care providers may not always be aware of the quality of written patient education materials, especially the ones provided by external suppliers like pharmaceutical firms, commercial organizations, scientific societies, or private hospitals. Unfortunately, most of the health education materials are produced with inadequate attention to their suitability for the intended audience. The medical librarian, especially public health or hospital librarians could play an important role in assisting physicians in assessing the quality of written health educational materials for patients, especially in terms of their suitability for patients with low literacy skills.

Aims: The aim of this study was to assess the suitability and readability of written health education materials being used for education of patients in Division of Pain Research and Treatment of the University Hospital in Cracow (Poland).

Methods: The Suitability Assessment of Materials (SAM) instrument [5] and Gunning-FOG formula [6] were used to assess the suitability and readability of the written health education materials, provided to patients in Division of Pain Treatment of the University Hospital in Cracow.

Results: The conducted assessment of the quality of written educational materials for patients could help health professionals in choosing the most valuable and suitable materials, especially for those patients with low literacy skills. It could also indicate which features should be taken into account when designing written health materials for patients, to maximize their effectiveness and to reduce barriers which could negatively influence the comprehension of health information. The study aims to demonstrate how important a role could hospital and public health librarians play in supporting the daily medical practice.

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[2] Hoffmann T, Worrall L. Designing effective written health education materials: Considerations for health professionals. *Disability & Rehabilitation* 26(19): 1166-1173. Available from: Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition . [cited October 28, 2009]

[3] Hoffman, opus.cit.

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- [5] Doak CC, Doak LG, Root JH. *Teaching patient with low literacy skills*, 2 nd ed., Philadelphia: JB Lippincott Company; 1996.
- [6] *The technique of clear writing* by Gunning, R. McGraw-Hill International Book Co; New York, NY 1952.