

**POSTER SESSION 2 ABSTRACTS**  
12<sup>th</sup> Annual HMO Research Network Conference

May 1-3, 2006 Boston, MA

**Research Administration**  
**PS2-5**

**Reading Matters: Strategies for Creating Study Materials the Participants Really Understand**

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**Background:** Health literacy is becoming an increasingly important concern in research. Despite this, researchers often struggle to develop study materials that participants can understand. It is not easy to write at the target 6th to 8th-grade level recommended by most Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), and research indicates that informed consent documents rarely meet these targets. Researchers need access to effective tools and training to help combat this problem.

**Approach/Outcomes:** The "Reading Matters" workshop was specifically designed to give researchers effective strategies for writing materials that their study participants can truly understand. The workshop provides a detailed and step-wise description of various methods for improving a document's readability. Using examples from actual study materials, the workshop examines common pitfalls and describes a systematic approach to avoiding them. Afterward, attendees participate in a hands-on editing exercise. The workshop also presents various methods for rating a document's reading level and describes other health literacy resources and research projects.

Workshop content is also packaged as a "Readability Toolkit," which includes a quick reference guide for improving the reading level of participant materials, a comprehensive writing checklist, simplified wording suggestions for common research vocabulary, and a catalogue of boilerplate language for written consent forms.

These resources were developed out of findings from the Project to Review and Improve Study Materials (PRISM), which examined materials from 43 studies fielded at the Center for Health Studies (CHS) between 2000 and 2005, as well as literacy tools and guidelines from 22 outside institutions. PRISM staff also attended multiple health literacy sessions at the 2005 Human Research Protections Program Conference.

**Conclusions:** Although literacy is increasingly garnering attention, many HMORN studies use language that is difficult for the average subject to understand. Tools and training opportunities aimed at helping researchers combat this problem are valuable resources to disseminate among Network members. CHS is hopeful that the resources described above will inspire further investigation into health literacy concerns and be of benefit to project teams or IRBs who are striving to develop study materials that participants can easily read and understand.