Greetings! I am pleased to see that we are different. May we become greater than the sum of both of us.

Vulcan Greeting
Health Literacy for Research

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Importance of Literacy and Health Literacy

• Why should we care?
• State of the nation
• Strategies
Health Literacy Defined

• “...the degree to which individuals can obtain, process, and understand the basic health information and services they need to make appropriate health decisions.”

• But health literacy goes beyond the individual.

• It also depends upon the skills, preferences, and expectations of health information and care providers: our doctors; nurses; administrators; community health workers; the media; and many others.
Where are we?

- A large segment of the American population has basic (29%) to below basic (14%) prose literacy skills.
- Even larger segments have basic (33%) or below basic (22%) simple quantitative skills.
- Five percent of Americans are non-literate in English.
- 90 million Americans lack basic health literacy skills [Kirsch 2002].
- 47 million Americans, or almost half of the adult population of this country, were either functionally illiterate, or marginally literate. [Kirsch 1993].
- Limited English proficiency were excluded from the NAAL survey.
  - Language barriers cannot explain the findings.
Enter...the Research Process

- Consent Forms
- HIPAA waivers
Critical background

- Even accounting for populations with low socioeconomic status, these results imply that nearly **half of the population** in the reviewed studies had health literacy skills that would **impede their understanding of most informed consent forms**.
Informed Consents

- Challenging language
- High syllable words
  - COLONOSCOPY
- Legal phrases/sentences
- Long documents
Strategies to improve consents

• Explain technical terms or use the simpler alternative

• **Examples:**
  - “Chemotherapy is the use of drugs to treat cancer”
  - “Noninvasive means without surgery, needles, or cutting skin”
  - “arteriovenous fistula (abnormal opening between any artery and vein)”
  - “benign (not cancer)”
• Transadaptation versus translation
  – *The vodka is good but the steak is bad*
  – *The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak*

• Plain language
• Short sentences
• Short syllable words
• Avoid jargon
• Avoid abbreviations and acronyms
  – *We will assess BrCS via MMG in AAW using SR.*
12th grade

• You voluntarily consent to participate in this research investigation. You may refuse to participate in this investigation or withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in this study without penalty and without affecting your future care or your ability to receive alternative medical treatment at the university.
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.
4th grade

- You don’t have to be in this research study. You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later. Your decision will not affect your regular care. Your doctor’s attitude toward you will not change.