

BACKGROUND

It's estimated that over two million new cancer diagnoses will occur in 2026. Advances in treatments have improved survival and care, but the complexity of clinical trials can make navigation difficult.

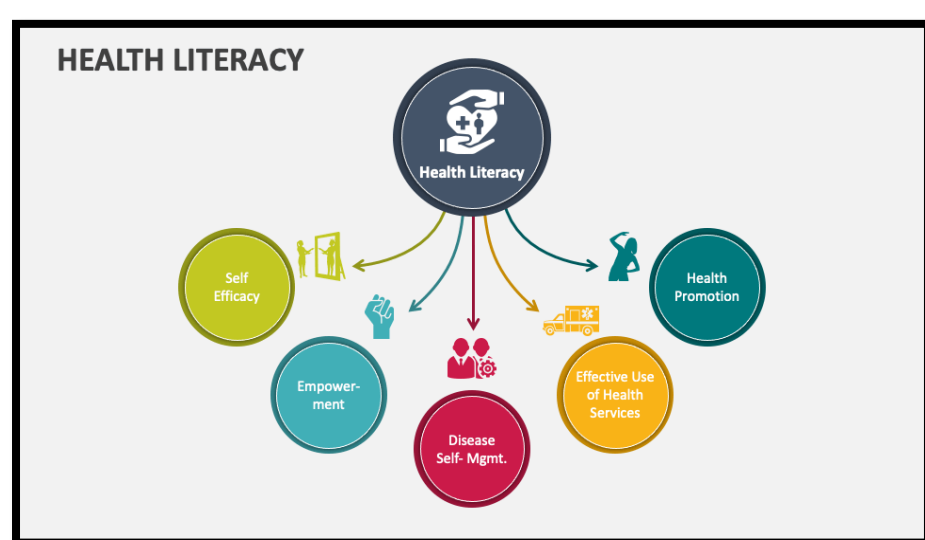
A Rutgers Cancer Institute internal audit found a gap: no patient enrolled in a trial had a health literacy screening. Annually, over 700 patients enroll in 200+ adult and pediatric trials; about 49% are minorities or underrepresented, 20% are Spanish-speaking, and 37% are 65+, all of whom are at higher risk of limited health literacy. Understanding this is vital for the trial team.

Health literacy affects understanding and use of health information, shaped by personal, cultural, social, and political factors, and it impacts decision-making. It's a common, often unnoticed barrier to trial participation.

Reviewing five years of deviation data and recent audits shows ongoing challenges with pill diary completion and medication compliance. Some participants repeatedly misunderstand trial requirements, possibly due to low health literacy. Re-education efforts have been ineffective. Addressing health literacy and customizing interventions could improve pill diary and medication adherence.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

This project aims to incorporate health literacy screening conducted by research nurse clinicians (RNCs) during informed consent discussions for a clinical trial. The health literacy screening score will help RNCs identify trial participants who may need additional support in understanding trial requirements, such as completing pill diaries and ensuring medication adherence.



SOLUTIONS AND METHODS

The Short Assessment of Health Literacy Tool (SAHL) will be used by RNCs to assess participants aged 18 and older in a clinical trial for their comprehension and pronunciation of health-related terms. SAHL scores will be recorded in the electronic medical record (Epic) and will aid in tailoring patient care based on these scores, particularly in activities such as managing pill diaries and providing education on medication adherence.

The SAHL method involves using laminated flashcards to present 18 health-related terms one at a time. Participants will read each term aloud and will be tested on both comprehension and pronunciation. Based on their performance, participants can receive a SAHL score of 15 or higher (indicating adequate health literacy) or less than 14 (indicating limited health literacy). The administration of the test takes approximately 2-3 minutes. For Spanish-speaking participants, an interpreter will be available to administer the questions. The final score will be documented in Epic.

The 18 items of SAHL-E, ordered according to item difficulty (keys and distracters are listed in the same random order as in the field interview)

Stem	Key or Distracter		
1. kidney	__urine	__fever	__don't know
2. occupation	__work	__education	__don't know
3. medication	__instrument	__treatment	__don't know
4. nutrition	__healthy	__soda	__don't know
5. miscarriage	__loss	__marriage	__don't know
6. infection	__plant	__virus	__don't know
7. alcoholism	__addiction	__recreation	__don't know
8. pregnancy	__birth	__childhood	__don't know
9. seizure	__dizzy	__calm	__don't know
10. dose	__sleep	__amount	__don't know
11. hormones	__growth	__harmony	__don't know
12. abnormal	__different	__similar	__don't know
13. directed	__instruction	__decision	__don't know
14. nerves	__bored	__anxiety	__don't know
15. constipation	__blocked	__loose	__don't know
16. diagnosis	__evaluation	__recovery	__don't know
17. hemorrhoids	__veins	__heart	__don't know
18. syphilis	__contraception	__condom	__don't know

Flashcard Examples (Spanish)



SAHL laminated flashcards

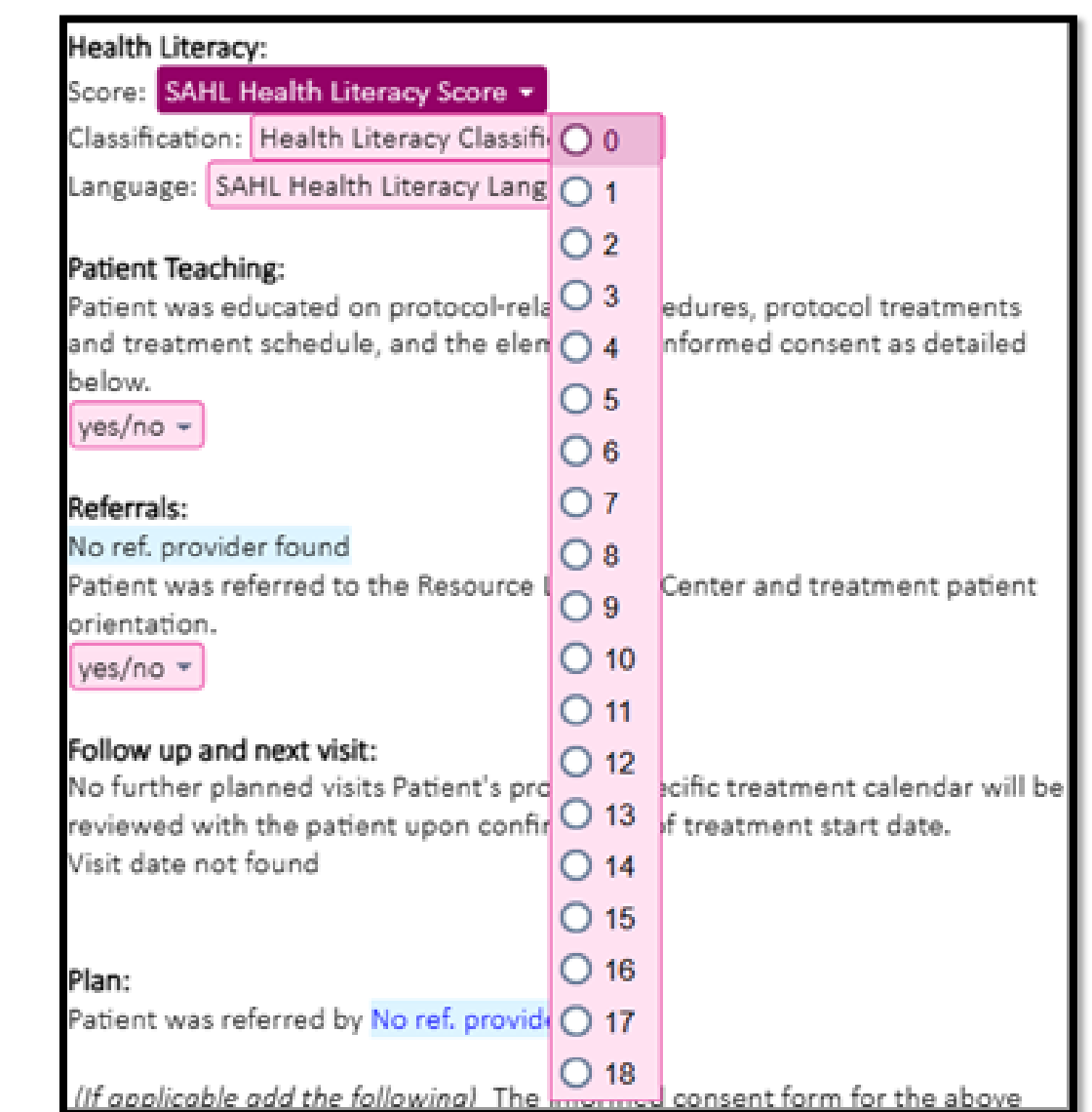
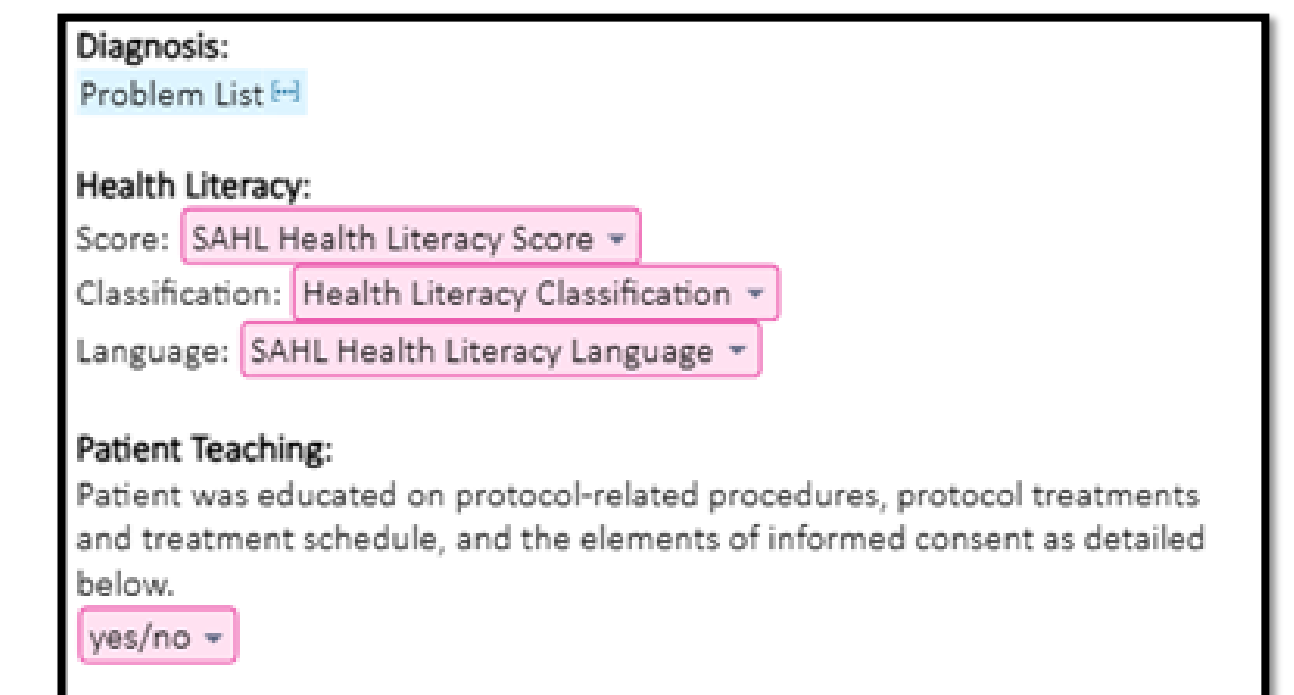
- Each card contains one medical term and two options
- The answer is on the back of the card

Spanish-speaking patients
 Use an interpreter to administer the questions

Using Flashcards

- Present patient with 18 terms, one at a time
- Ask the patient to read the test term aloud
- Test the patient's comprehension and pronunciation of health-related terms
- Use the answer key to record responses
- Administration of the assessment takes 2-3 minutes

Documentation of the SAHL assessment
Epic Informed Consent Template



OUTCOME

The goals of this project are to reduce deviations in pill diary completion and improve medication compliance. Additionally, we will see whether the reduction in repetitive deviations for a trial participant decreases. This will be measured by tracking reductions in deviations and audit findings.

LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future directions include collaborating with Rutgers Community Outreach and Engagement to develop population-specific tools for trial participants with low literacy levels.