

Teaching Providers to Write in Plain Language

Emily Hitchcock, MD

Providence St Vincent Medical Center

Emily.Hitchcock@Providence.org

Background

Communication Breakdown

- Written instructions given at the end of an office visit can improve patient understanding and adherence to a medical plan
- About half of American adults read at a 5th grade level or lower
- Many health care providers write instructions for their patients at a 7th grade level or higher
- Providers can learn to write in plain language if taught the knowledge, attitudes and skills



Project Aim

Teach providers the knowledge, attitudes and skills to write their patient instructions in plain language – specifically:

- Decrease each provider's average writing level to 6th grade or lower
- Train 6 clinics by spring 2015
- Engage patient groups within the CCOs so they begin asking for a change
- Reach provider groups so they will begin asking to be trained

The infographic features an orange background with two examples of patient instructions. The top example is marked with a yellow 'X' and is labeled '10th grade' with a blue arrow pointing left. The bottom example is marked with a yellow checkmark and is labeled '1st grade' with a blue arrow pointing left. A yellow curved arrow points from the top example down to the bottom example, indicating a transition from complex to plain language.

X “To stage your malignancy, we need to perform diagnostic scans. Then, once we know the etiology, we can discuss some of the various treatment options.”

✓ “You have cancer. I need to know where it has spread. A CAT scan should tell us. Then, we’ll know if drugs can stop it.”

10th grade

1st grade

Project Team

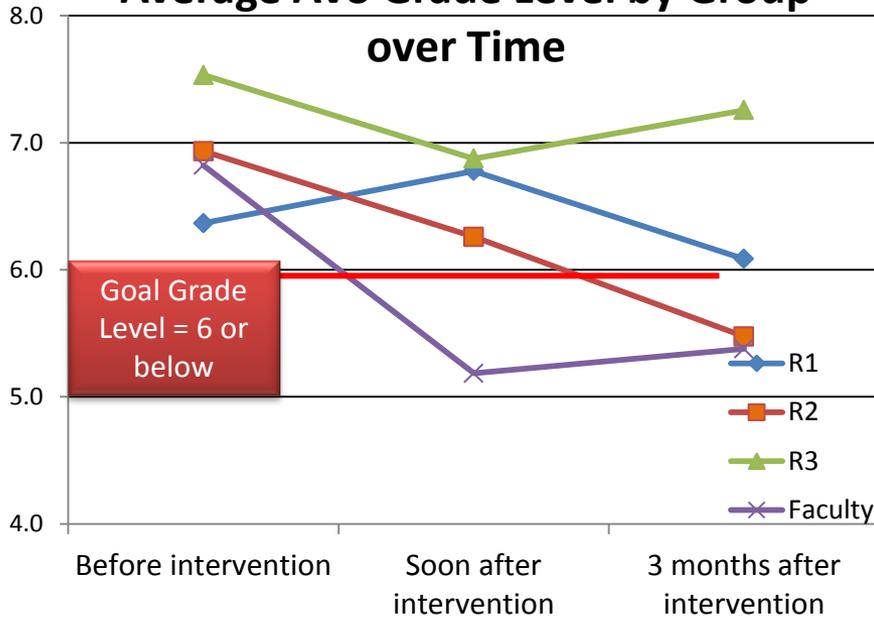
- Emily Hitchcock, MD
Providence St Vincent Internal
Medicine Residency Program
- Shelley Sanders, MD
Providence St Vincent Internal
Medicine Residency Program
- Kasey Zamago, BS candidate
Portland State University



Project Measures

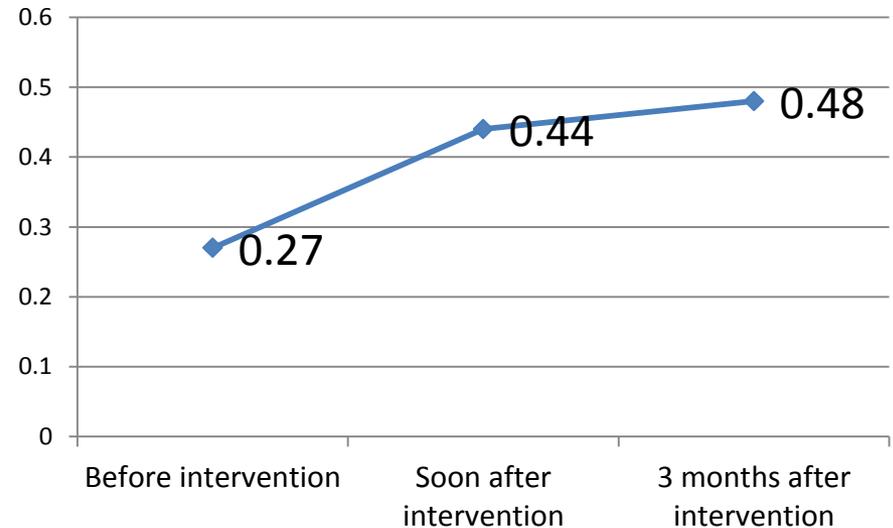
Clinic A

Average AVS Grade Level by Group over Time



Clinic A

Percent of Providers with AVS Grade Level 6 or Below



AVS = after-visit summary

Progress and Next Steps

Building provider energy and commitment:

- 4 clinics trained
- Post-intervention data pending
- 2 more clinic trainings scheduled



CAC contact made:

- Empower patients to be the drivers for change

Future directions:

- Building plain language advisor into electronic medical record
- Expand to include languages other than English