



CENTER FOR PATIENT EDUCATION AND HEALTH LITERACY

Center for Patient
Education and Health
Literacy

PaCT



World-class Medical Complex

STLCOP sits squarely in the middle of one of the country's most distinguished medical communities, with neighbors like Barnes-Jewish Hospital, Washington University School of Medicine, and St. Louis Children's Hospital.

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Center for Patient Education and Health Literacy

Health literacy. It sounds like a matter of vocabulary, learning the specialized language of health care. Well, that is part of it—but only a part. Being health literate also means knowing enough about your own health, your medications, and our nation's health care system and how it operates to be able to make good health decisions. That's increasingly difficult as health care and the technology we use to stay healthy becomes more complex and as our culture—and ways of communicating—becomes more diverse. Add to that the obstacles many people encounter as they age, and you've got a significant need for health literacy education. Indeed, in 2010 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said only 12 percent of English-speaking Americans are proficient in health literacy skills—which means nearly 90 percent need help understanding and using everyday health information.

St. Louis College of Pharmacy aims to help meet that need through a new Center for Patient Education and Health Literacy. Our proposed center's goal is to improve health care by teaching current pharmacists as well as student pharmacists better ways to provide easy-to-use health information. Eventually, we hope to create a learning community in which a variety of health care practitioners collaborate to ensure patients have the knowledge they need to make informed health decisions. To that end, we will be forming partnerships with other institutions geared toward training all patient care team members in practices that promote health literacy.

Our new center will coordinate the College's work to integrate health literacy principles into student pharmacy classes, using specialized training and hands-on community programs. Center resources also will focus our work on such projects as a new patient interviewing tool we're developing—called "PaCT," for Patient-centered Communication Tools—to foster better communication between pharmacists and their patients. Other specific education and research projects the center will house include:

- The STLCOP Asthma-Friendly Pharmacy program. We plan to build upon and assess an education program we developed that targets asthma, a particularly troublesome health problem in the St. Louis area. Our program teaches pharmacists and their staff members about asthma treatment and prevention, providing training in asthma medications, devices, and patient education. Through the center, we'll review the program's effectiveness and economic feasibility. We also plan to study ways to expand asthma education and make it self-supporting.



- Medication self management and home care. Health literacy scores among adults 65 and older are lower than those of all other adults, but seniors may need those skills more than any other age group given the frequency of chronic health conditions in older Americans. A good first step? Helping seniors pull together an accurate and complete list of medications they're taking. We're devising a project aimed at improving the health literacy skills of seniors so that they can create and manage a list of their medicines as well as communicate any medication concerns they may have with their health care providers.

- Health Literacy Institute. Through this proposed program, STLCOP will host nationally and internationally recognized authorities at a summer institute for health care professionals that will focus on the attitudes, skills, and approaches that have proven effective in improving patient understanding of health information and services.