Health Literacy Integration at AdventHealth University: A Comprehensive Approach

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Abstract
Health literacy plays a crucial role in determining health outcomes by influencing an individual's ability to access, comprehend, and apply health-related information effectively. AdventHealth University (AHU) launched the Health Literacy Integration Program in 2024 in response to the growing need for health literacy education. This initiative continues to expand, incorporating university-wide webinars, community partnerships, curriculum integration, and professional outreach efforts. This article provides an overview of the program's key components, achievements, and future directions.

Introduction
AdventHealth University is dedicated to enhancing health literacy among its students, staff, and faculty to support informed health decisions and improved health outcomes. Since its inception in 2022, the health literacy initiative has grown into a multifaceted program that extends its impact beyond the university to benefit the broader community.

Health literacy has emerged as a critical component of public health and education. Defined as the ability to access, understand, and use health information to make informed decisions, health literacy is closely tied to improved patient outcomes and health equity. Libraries, as trusted community, and academic institutions are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between health information and the populations they serve. This case study explores the multifaceted health literacy outreach initiatives spearheaded by Jessica Daly, Health Literacy Coordinator at the R.A. Williams Library of AdventHealth University, and how these initiatives have evolved to meet the needs of both academic and external communities.

Background and Timeline of Health Literacy Initiatives
In February 2022, Jessica Daly was tasked with continuing health literacy outreach efforts within the community and professional organizations she had begun years prior while working as a consumer health librarian for Orlando Health. Beginning in March of 2022, Daly conducted monthly webinars, partnering with organizations such as the Orange County Library System, Tampa-Hillsborough County Library System, the Florida Library Association, and the Florida Literacy Coalition. These efforts included health literacy webinars aimed at empowering library patrons, librarians, healthcare professionals, and students with accessible and actionable health information.

By November 2023, Daly was encouraged to increase health literacy outreach efforts, emphasizing the need to "expand the market." This marked a turning point, with health literacy becoming a central focus of the library's strategic initiatives. Daly was allowed to spend at least 25 percent of her time on health literacy integration efforts while continuing to act as Head of Collection Development and Electronic Resources and Head of Library Outreach and Marketing. The recognition of Daly's contributions culminated in September 2024 when discussions began about creating a dedicated librarian position focused solely on health literacy. Daly was named Health Literacy Coordinator in November of 2024 and now dedicates all her professional time to the creation, development, and execution of the AHU Health Literacy Integration Plan.

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The AHU Health Literacy Integration Plan

The AHU Health Literacy Integration Plan is a comprehensive strategy with the goal of embedding health literacy throughout the university and the AdventHealth system. The plan's goals include incorporating health literacy within strategic plans, programs, and educational initiatives; promoting changes in healthcare education to improve communication, informed decision-making, access to services, and collaborating with communities to develop cost-effective strategies for health literacy improvement. Additional objectives include facilitating the sharing of resources, supporting adult education and culturally appropriate health information services, building partnerships, and training all students, faculty, staff, and healthcare providers in health literacy and plain language.

The target populations for this initiative encompass AHU students, faculty, staff, patients, and community members. The plan outlines several key actions within AHU, such as integrating health literacy across curricula, providing health literacy training for faculty and staff, offering plain language consultations, conducting monthly health literacy webinars, and hosting health literacy community outreach events.

It also includes ongoing health literacy scholarship projects and health literacy consultations. The plan emphasizes continuing health literacy education for future clinicians by incorporating health literacy as a component of Whole Person Education.

Daly will draw educational resources from reputable organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes of Health, and Healthy People 2030. The plan also benefits from the expertise of health literacy professionals.

The ultimate outcomes of this integration plan include the establishment of an AHU Center for Health Literacy, headed by Daly, and the creation of an AdventHealth Center for Health Literacy to provide education and training to clinicians, patients, and the community. The integration of health literacy is expected to have a significant impact, distinguishing AHU as a leader in health literacy and improving the academic experience for students, staff, and faculty. It is also expected to lead to better clinical experiences for students, increased retention and graduation rates, and greater job opportunities for AHU graduates.

Moreover, AdventHealth will benefit from improved clinician-patient communication, enhanced patient self-care, and better patient outcomes, including a reduction in hospital readmissions. By implementing health literacy strategies, hospitals can mitigate the fiscal impact of readmissions, improve patient care, and reduce costly penalties from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

University Health Literacy Webinars

The program's foundation lies in monthly live health literacy webinars designed to educate AHU students, staff, and faculty. These webinars serve as a vital platform for disseminating health information and fostering a culture of health literacy awareness within the university community. Recordings of these webinars are publicly accessible through the R.A. Williams Library website.

Partnership with AHU Hope Clinic

A pivotal component of AHU's health literacy initiative is the collaboration with the AHU Hope Clinic, a nonprofit organization that provides physical therapy, occupational therapy, and cardiac rehabilitation services to underserved and uninsured patients. In collaboration with the Occupational Therapy Department in 2024, Daly assisted graduate students in developing plain-language materials and conducting cooking demonstrations focused on the DASH diet. Since that time, she works closely with Hope Clinic leadership to offer health literacy education through webinars, customized health fact sheets, and patient consultations. Daly is also available for health literacy training for the Hope Clinic medical staff.

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Plain Language Training Pilot
The AdventHealth University Plain Language Training Pilot, launched in August 2025, represents a key milestone in advancing the institution's commitment to health literacy and effective communication. Developed and led by Daly, the program began with the Human Resources Department and received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants who emphasized the value of clear, compassionate communication in supporting employees and the broader university community. The training equips staff with practical tools to write and speak in plain language, ensuring that information is accessible, understandable, and actionable for all audiences.
Funded in part by the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) grant, the pilot will expand across departments through May 2026, fostering a campus-wide culture that prioritizes clarity, inclusivity, and whole-person understanding in every interaction.

Community Partnerships
AHU's health literacy efforts extend beyond campus through strategic partnerships with community organizations. Daly collaborates with the Orange County Library System to deliver monthly public webinars. Daly also contributed to OCLS's Professional Development Days in 2023 and 2024, enhancing health literacy competencies among professional librarians and staff across Central Florida.
In Fall 2024, AHU expanded its outreach by partnering with Seminole State College to present health literacy classes to ESL and GED students preparing for college, a collaboration that continues into Spring 2025.

Echelon Partnership – Continuing Education for Healthcare Professionals
Echelon is the continuing education division of AHU and AdventHealth, specializing in online continuing education and training. Echelon integrates course design and media development, upholding the highest credentialing standards to ensure the best quality educational resources.

Echelon's mission is to serve the continuing education needs of individuals and organizations in the healthcare industry by offering high-quality e-learning and information resources to enhance professional development. The division works closely with AHU and AdventHealth clinical educators, as well as subject matter experts, to assess learner needs and identify professional practice gaps. As part of AdventHealth, operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Echelon draws on a legacy rooted in health and healing. With more than 350 healthcare facilities worldwide and a "Greater as a Whole" philosophy, Echelon benefits from access to a diverse network of seasoned, experienced academic professors from the university.

To ensure courses remain relevant and up-to-date with the most advanced medical standards and practices, Echelon partners with site coordinators from the nine AdventHealth campuses. This collaboration helps identify gaps in healthcare practice, providing a rich source of content expertise, target audiences, and content reviewers who are well-versed in patient care, outcomes, and closing education gaps.

Echelon has recognized health literacy as a key topic for its platform, and work has begun to develop an educational series aimed at medical professionals, faculty, AHU students, and the public.

NNLM Grant
Daly was awarded a National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) grant in August of 2025 to support the university's Health Literacy Integration Plan. The funding is being used to purchase and develop educational resources for students, staff, faculty, and the community, as well as to host multiple health literacy sessions and events through April 2026. The grant has already supported the Navigating Menopause: Before, During, and After event held in September 2025, which saw strong participation and meaningful outcomes in improving health literacy related to women's health.

Outcomes and Impact
The impact of these initiatives has been far-reaching. Data collected from the 2024 AHU Health Literacy Webinar Series revealed participation from 93 individuals. Feedback surveys highlighted the value of these webinars in enhancing attendees' understanding of health literacy concepts and their applications. Moreover, the occupational therapy graduate student projects and Hope Clinic initiatives highlighted the tangible benefits of integrating health literacy into patient care.

Students at AdventHealth University who receive training in health literacy, plain language, and enhanced patient-provider communication skills gain a distinct advantage in the competitive landscape of health sciences programs. These students are equipped to provide enhanced patient-centered care by excelling in the ability to communicate complex medical concepts in an accessible way, which builds trust with patients across all literacy levels. The training also fosters empathy and understanding, cultivating sensitivity to the diverse needs of patients and strengthening patient-provider relationships.

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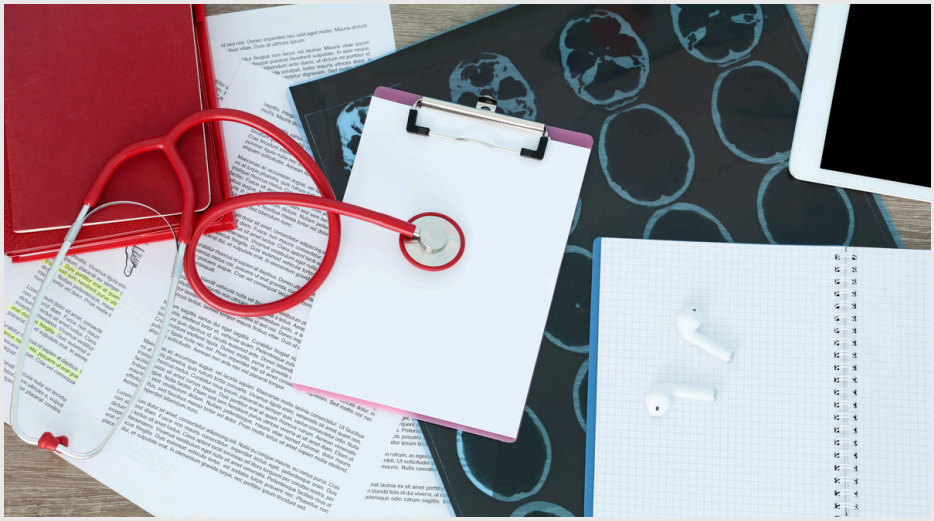

The health literacy training students receive leads to improved health outcomes. By learning how to communicate effectively, AHU-trained providers empower patients to make informed decisions, which often results in better treatment plan compliance and overall health outcomes. This training also focuses on preventative care, enabling students to provide clear, actionable education that helps patients adopt preventative health measures, an essential skill in today's healthcare landscape.

AHU trains its students to excel in interdisciplinary collaboration. Through effective communication, they bridge gaps between professionals from various healthcare disciplines, ensuring smooth teamwork. Their expertise in health literacy allows them to educate peers and patients, making them valuable contributors to both clinical and educational settings.

Graduates from AHU have versatile skillsets which make them highly career-ready. With health literacy and communication skills in high demand, these students are well-positioned to meet the needs of employers seeking healthcare providers who can effectively engage with diverse populations. Their training in communication and literacy prepares them for leadership roles, educational opportunities, and patient-facing positions.

The health literacy training at AHU aligns with industry trends and standards. Many healthcare organizations prioritize health literacy as part of quality improvement and patient safety initiatives, and AHU graduates are equipped to lead in these efforts. Their ability to address health disparities positions them to reduce barriers to care and improve equity in healthcare delivery.

AHU students' training in health literacy strengthens their reputation and professional networks. They are prepared to advocate for health literacy initiatives, positioning themselves as innovators within healthcare organizations. Additionally, their enhanced communication skills allow them to build strong, meaningful relationships with patients, peers, and mentors, which helps expand their professional networks.

By integrating these essential skills into their education, AHU students not only excel in their respective roles but also contribute to the university's reputation as a leader in preparing healthcare professionals capable of addressing the complex challenges of modern healthcare.

Curriculum Integration and Faculty Support

AHU's commitment to Whole Person Education is demonstrated through the integration of health literacy across academic programs. Key contributions by Daly included co-teaching ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 during the Spring 2025 trimester, Summer 2025 Trimester, and the Fall 2025 Trimester where they covered topics such as communication between healthcare providers and patients, health disparities, patient education, and health literacy outcomes and also works as a consultant for graduate students from the Occupational Therapy department as they complete scholarship projects on the topic of health literacy. Daly will also serve as a health literacy consultant for the Health Humanities and Social Sciences Department to help develop a new Bachelor of Science program that incorporates health literacy. Due to the success of these partnerships, Daly is now collaborating with 9 professors across her campus integrating health literacy into their curriculum and classroom instruction. Daly is actively participating in the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee to integrate health literacy into various academic disciplines using plain language.

In addition to these contributions, Daly collaborates with the Center for Faculty Excellence to support faculty development by presenting health literacy sessions at New Faculty Orientations, leading a health literacy-focused session during the March 2025 Lunch and Learn event for faculty, providing health literacy materials on the Center for Faculty Excellence Canvas website, and mentoring faculty interested in integrating health literacy into their curriculum.

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In 2025, Jessica Daly was invited to join the AHU Mission Integration Team to help educate and integrate health literacy across various aspects of the university. The team focuses on four key pathways that inform its work: Belonging, Wellbeing, Fulfillment, and Purpose. These pathways guide the team's approach to curricular activities, co-curricular activities, and team member development. Daly's expertise in health literacy plays a crucial role in supporting the integration of health literacy principles into these pathways, enhancing both student and faculty engagement with key health-related issues. Her involvement will ensure that health literacy is woven into the university's broader mission of fostering a supportive, holistic, and purpose-driven educational environment.

Professional Leadership and Outreach

Daly's leadership in health literacy extends to professional conferences and educational outreach. She served on the Health Literacy Conference planning committee for the Florida Literacy Coalition in 2023 and 2024, where she also presented at the conference for two consecutive years. In addition, Daly has provided health literacy instruction for library professionals through a variety of organizations, including Southeast Florida Library Information Network, Northeast Florida Library Information Network, Florida Library Association, Southern Chapter of the Medical Library Association, Tampa-Bay Library Consortium, along with individual academic and public libraries.

Recognition and Future Directions

Daly was named Librarian of the Year in 2024 by the Florida Health Sciences Library Association for her work in health literacy. The future of the AHU Health Literacy Integration Plan focuses on continuing to assist professors in integrating health literacy into their classroom curriculum and instruction. A key goal is to build new community partnerships that will help improve health literacy and the overall quality of life in the surrounding community. In recognition of her significant contributions to this effort, Daly was appointed as AHU's Health Literacy Coordinator by the R.A. Williams Library and university leadership in 2024. As the role continues to evolve, her strategic focus aims to enhance the academic experience and foster a broader impact on health literacy across various sectors. Daly's leadership is expected to drive innovation in health literacy education and further establish AHU as a leader in health literacy research and community engagement.

Conclusion

The Health Literacy Integration Program at AHU represents a comprehensive approach to promoting health literacy across academic, professional, and community settings. Through strategic partnerships, curriculum integration, and faculty development, the program empowers individuals to make informed health decisions, improving community health outcomes. Future efforts will focus on expanding outreach initiatives, enhancing faculty engagement, and further integrating health literacy across diverse academic disciplines.

The health literacy initiatives at AdventHealth University's R.A. Williams Library exemplify the transformative potential of academic libraries in addressing public health challenges. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, engaging with community partners, and developing innovative educational programs, AHU's library has set a benchmark for integrating health literacy into academic and healthcare settings. This case study highlights the importance of vision, persistence, and adaptability in driving meaningful change, offering a model for other libraries seeking to expand their impact in health literacy education.

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