



**Hoosier Alliance**

Hoosier Alliance Is An AmeriHealth Mercy Company

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Dear Provider:

Medical terms and treatment instructions can be difficult for any patient to understand — no matter what level of education has been obtained. Couple this with other communication barriers such as language and cultural differences, and it's easy to see how some patients can walk away from their doctor appointments without a clear understanding of their medical condition or the care instructions they've been given.

Consider these statistics from the National Patient Safety Foundations' Partnership for Clear Health Communication:

- **Most health care materials are written above the 10th grade.**
- **One out of five American adults reads at the 5<sup>th</sup>-grade level or below. The average American reads at the 8<sup>th</sup>- to 9<sup>th</sup>-grade level.**
- **Annual health care costs for individuals with low literacy skills are 4 times higher than those with higher literacy skills.**
- **Only about 50% of all patients take medications as directed.**

Although it can sometimes be difficult to break through patient educational and cultural barriers, it's important that we make the effort. Research has shown that physicians who take into account their patients' individual literacy levels and cultural backgrounds – and customize their patient interactions accordingly – are more likely to have patients who comply with their care instructions.

As you consider the diversity of your own patient population, I hope you find the enclosed brochure informative. It outlines interpersonal techniques that can be incorporated when communicating with patients who possess low health literacy. It also provides an overview of how the definition of an acceptable communication style can vary from culture to culture.

If you have any questions, or if I can be of assistance, please call 888-961-3100.

Sincerely,

Mark P. Rollins, MD  
Medical Director