

Persuasive Communication: Issues, Evidence and Ideas



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FDA Risk Communication

Advisory Committee

Rockville, MD

August 14-15, 2008

Does communication change behavior?

What are the barriers?

How can the FDA improve communication?

Impact of Mass Communication on Behavior Change

- **Modest, positive impacts**
- **Less effective among vulnerable groups**
- **Less effective for complex issues**
- **More effective with multiple channels**
- **Little information re: FDA communication**

Traditional Model of Health Communication

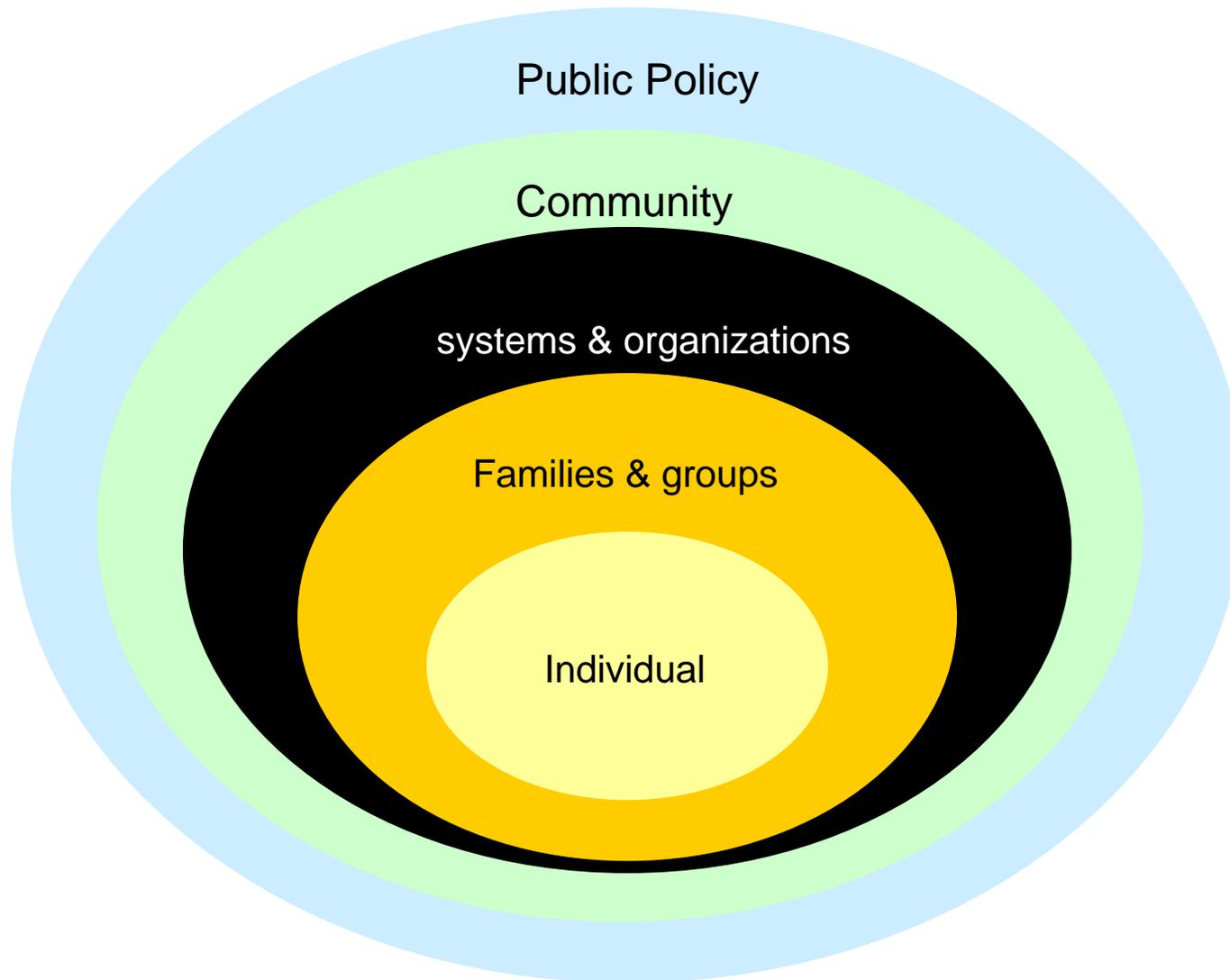


- Health Belief Model
- Theory of Reasoned Action, etc.

The Persuasion Challenge

“Socialize” Information
to be deeply
relevant & influential

Context: Social-Ecological Model



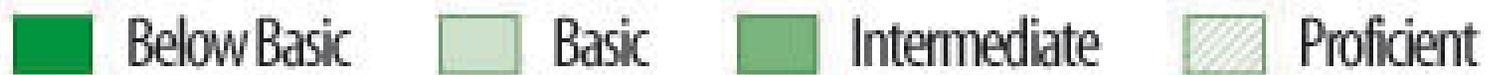
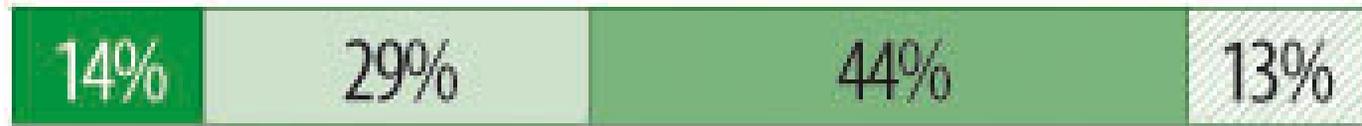
What is Health Literacy?

The ability to access, read,
understand and act on health information

National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) 2003



NAAL Findings 2003



Healthy Literacy Skills by Level

Below Basic	Circle the date of a medical appointment on a hospital appointment slip.
Basic	Give 2 reasons a person should be tested for a specific disease, based on information in a clearly written pamphlet.
Intermediate	Determine what time a person can take a prescription medication, based on information on the drug label that relates the timing of medication to eating.
Proficient	Calculate an employee's share of health insurance costs for a year, using a table.

What is it like?

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US Reading Levels Compared to Health Information Readability

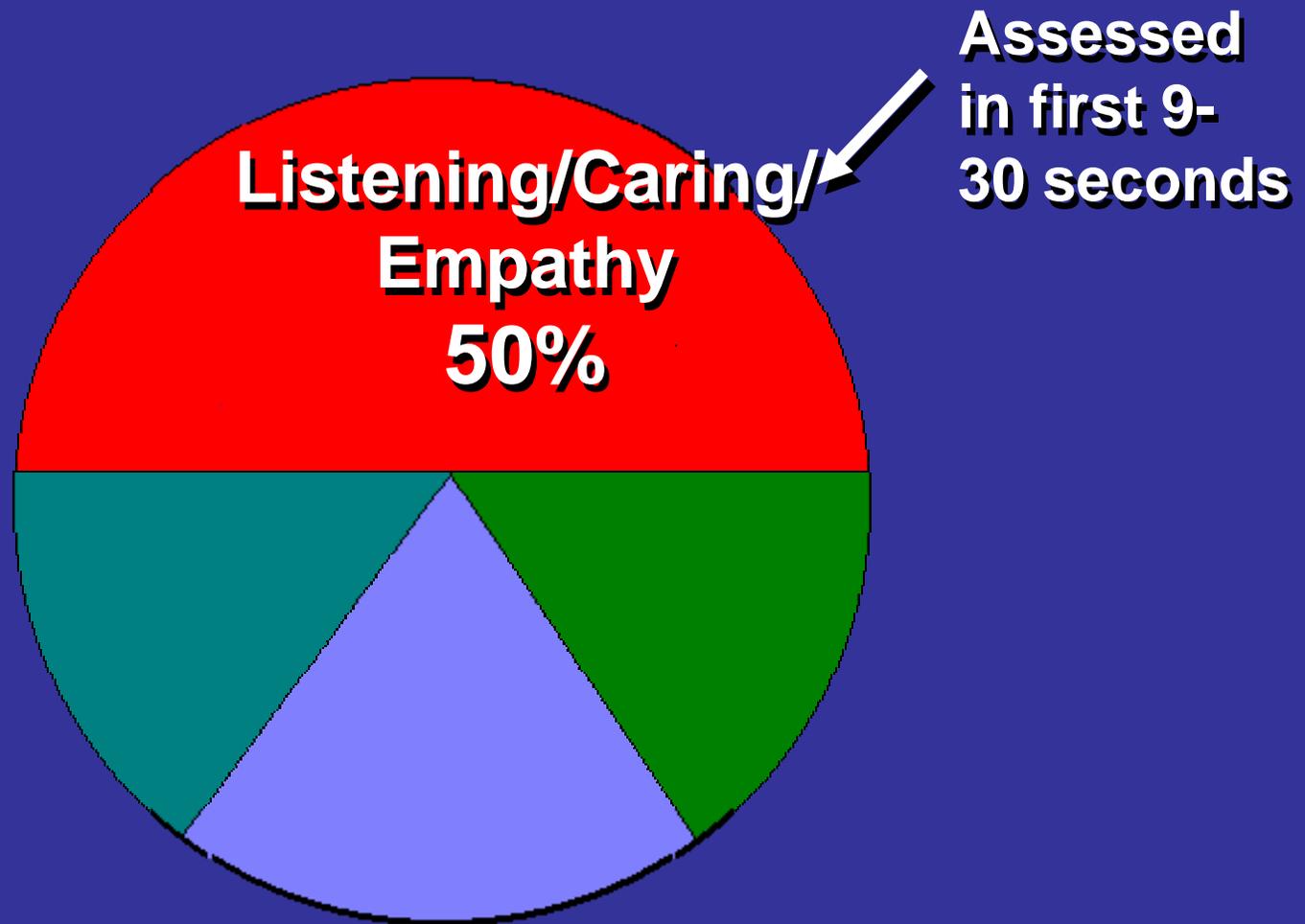
- The average American reads at the 7th-8th grade level
- 20% read below the 5th grade level
- Most health information is written at the 10-12th grade level.

Risk Communication Issues:

- Hard to understand, changeable
- Often requires quantitative skills
- Requires trusted, 2-way communication
- Emotions may overrule science in decisions
- Perceptions may vary by culture, education

In High Concern Situations, People Want to Know That You Care Before They Care

What You Know (Vincent Covello)



Persuasive Risk Communication Messages

- Communicate threats clearly and strongly
- Recommend a few specific, practical actions

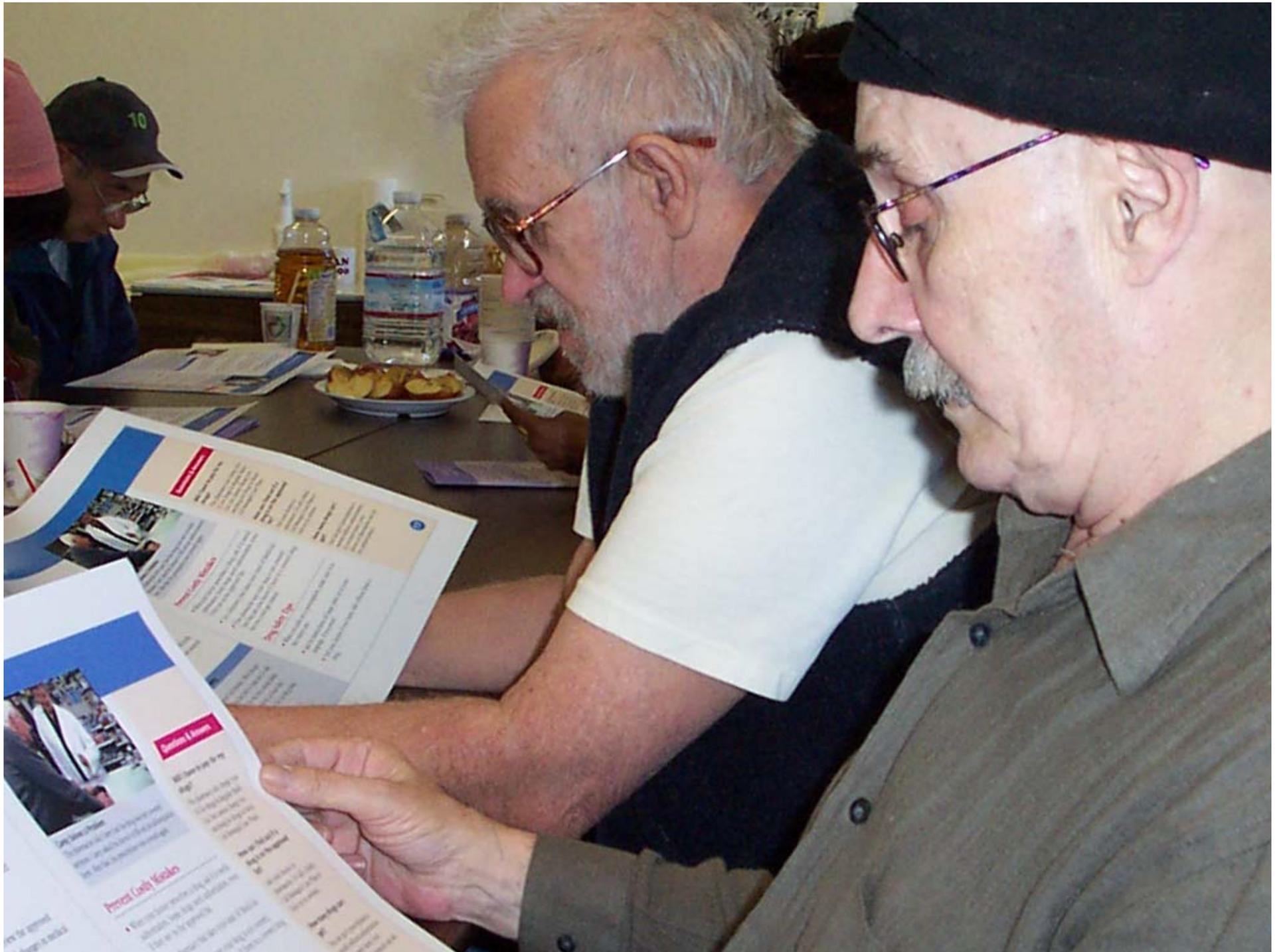
Tips to Improve Communication

CO-DESIGN WITH THE TARGET AUDIENCES

- Use photos and stories
- Acknowledge emotions
- Write information at appropriate user level
- Put info in small “chunks”
- Focus on behavior rather than facts
- Make information culturally sensitive

Designing Better Communication

1. Define communication objectives and audiences,
2. Assess audiences' knowledge, attitudes, behaviors (surveys, focus groups, etc.)
3. Set up a **PARTICIPATORY DESIGN** process with audiences (groups and individuals)
4. Iteratively develop and test communication
5. Engage audiences & stakeholders to plan delivery
6. Evaluate impact and revise
7. Adapt for other language and cultural groups





Recommendations #1: Assess Risk Communication

Assess current risk communication among diverse groups:

- Reading levels, Internet navigation, linguistic & cultural relevance**
- Impacts on users' knowledge**
- Impacts on users' attitudes and confidence**
- Impacts on users' actions**

Recommendation #2: Build Communication Capacity

- **Identify internal expertise and gaps; add staff**
- **Identify, train and publicize FDA spokesperson**
- **Convene a strategic planning meeting to set a communication research and action agenda**
- **Form partnerships with other federal, state and professional organizations**
- **Seek federal funding and other resources**

Recommendation #3: Improve Communication

- **Set standards:**

- Readability - 6th grade**

- Website meets DHHS usability guidelines**

- Linguistic and cultural relevance**

- Accessibility for people with disabilities**

- **DESIGN & TEST WITH DIVERSE GROUPS!**

Recommendation #3 (cont.): Improve Communication

- **Develop new delivery channels:**
 - Public Information Officers**
 - News media, including ethnic media**
 - Grocer's Associations**
- **Research communication impacts**

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