A5-14: The Evidence-Based Practice of Health Literacy Assessment by Rural Nurses

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**Abstract:**
**Introduction:** Health literacy is fundamental to quality and safety of patient care. Nurses provide the majority of health care information and teaching to patients. Thus, they have an ethical responsibility to understand and accurately assess health literacy status and provide health care information that is understandable and enables patients to make informed decisions. The need for health literacy is a significant challenge that is not fully understood or adequately considered by practicing nurses. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) defined health literacy as a person’s ability to obtain, process, and understand health care information, and to understand services needed to make appropriate health care decisions. The IOM has challenged health service providers to increase their knowledge, awareness, and responsiveness to health literacy. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore rural care registered nurses’ assessment of health literacy and its effect on patient care.

**Method(s):** Purposeful sampling was used to recruit adult practicing registered nurses in rural acute care settings. The investigator conducted separate semi-structured interviews using Rubin
and Rubin’s responsive interviewing model. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data collection ceased when data saturation was reached. Data were coded and themes identified.

**Results:** Findings from this study revealed that rural care registered nurses had limited knowledge of health literacy and were not aware of available health literacy assessment tools. The participants in this study utilized nurse developed tools which assessed only the literacy level of patients instead of health literacy. Themes identified were individual’s education level, patient teaching and education.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** Findings from this study indicated that nurses were not able to assess the health literacy of their patients and thus were not able to provide them with the tools to deal with their medical conditions. Implications from this study are useful in educating practicing nurses in the development of the necessary skills for health literacy assessment.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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