

# Health Affairs

---

At the Intersection of Health, Health Care and Policy

Cite this article as:  
Robert A. Logan  
Health Literacy Through The National Library Of Medicine  
*Health Affairs*, 31, no.5 (2012):1128

doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2012.0378

The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is available at:

<http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/31/5/1128.3.full.html>

**For Reprints, Links & Permissions:**

[http://healthaffairs.org/1340\\_reprints.php](http://healthaffairs.org/1340_reprints.php)

**E-mail Alerts :** <http://content.healthaffairs.org/subscriptions/etoc.dtl>

**To Subscribe:** <http://content.healthaffairs.org/subscriptions/online.shtml>

*Health Affairs* is published monthly by Project HOPE at 7500 Old Georgetown Road, Suite 600, Bethesda, MD 20814-6133. Copyright © 2012 by Project HOPE - The People-to-People Health Foundation. As provided by United States copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code), no part of *Health Affairs* may be reproduced, displayed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or by information storage or retrieval systems, without prior written permission from the Publisher. All rights reserved.

Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution

# LETTERS

---

*There is a limit of 300 words for letters to the editor. Health Affairs reserves the right to edit all letters for clarity, length, and tone. Letters can be submitted by e-mail, [letters@healthaffairs.org](mailto:letters@healthaffairs.org), or the Health Affairs website, <http://www.healthaffairs.org>.*

---

DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2012.0378

## Health Literacy Through The National Library Of Medicine

The National Library of Medicine staff agrees with Howard K. Koh and colleagues that federal initiatives can improve Americans' health literacy and help the nation move beyond the current cycle of crisis care (Feb 2011). There are comprehensive, evidence-based, noncommercial, free, US government-sponsored online resources that meet the spirit of the authors' call for action.

The library offers health literacy-inspired Internet services that are not mentioned in the article. For example, MedlinePlus.gov is a gateway to information about more than 900 diseases and conditions, as well as public health challenges. MedlinePlus also provides background information about medications, vitamins, and food supplements. It is available in English and Spanish, has health summaries in forty-three other languages, and provides easy-to-read medical information. In addition,

MedlinePlus Connect links electronic health records to consumer information within MedlinePlus.gov via free, open-source software.

Another service from the National Library of Medicine is Clinicaltrials.gov, a gateway to clinical trials in the United States and other nations. This website was the first to provide standardized clinical trial results.

The library also offers Genetics Home Reference, a guide to genetic conditions and human genetics written for lay audiences, and Pub Med Health, which enhances consumer decision support by providing one-stop access to international systematic reviews and clinical effectiveness information.

These wide-ranging consumer services exist because federal agencies, institutes, and centers within the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Health and Human Services are committed to enhancing the nation's health literacy.

Robert A. Logan  
*National Library of Medicine*  
BETHESDA, MARYLAND