

Undressed visuals for low-literate pharmacy visitors

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Successful visual aids in patient information improve patients' recall and comprehension of instructions, and encourage safe use of medication. In particular people with low literacy skills are empowered by pictograms, because of decreased dependence on the written word (Katz, Kripalani and Weiss 2006). However, existing pictogram series are not adjusted to the abstraction level of low-literate people, or lack a system of visuals of the body. Such visuals are required to explain the benefits of a medicine; information that plays a crucial role in enhancing patients' usually low adherence to therapy (Krueger, Berger and Felkey 2005).

This study is part of the evidence-based development of medical pictograms for low-literate patients. For 4 organs, 11 sketches were made that varied in levels of detail and context (figure 1). In an interview questionnaire, 191 visitors of a city pharmacy in the Netherlands were asked to indicate which depiction of an organ they considered clearest. Participants' functional literacy was determined by the validated Dutch version of the Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM-D). 15.7% (30/191) of the participants were classified as low-literate, enabling a comparison of pictogram choice between low- and high-literates.

Overall, organs drawn with medium detail level and shown within the directly surrounding body area were considered clearest. The skeleton was the favoured background for two of the four organs. Compared to literate patients, the low-literate group preferred less detailed depictions of organs. They also considered images showing only the organ clearer than the same organ depicted within the body.

These outcomes, together with the participants' remarks, will be used as

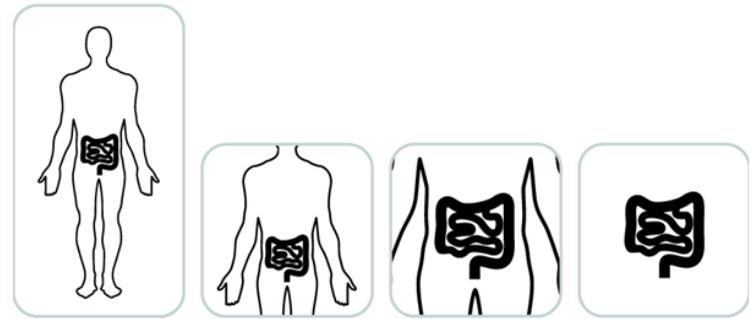


Figure 1: Variable "frame" for icons of the intestines ©BDD

guidelines for the iterative design process of organ icons. Resulting visuals will be incorporated in pictograms of medication instructions, and tested in the context of a visual/textual secondary patient information leaflet that is to be distributed at pharmacies.

References

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