

Reply to: Is Further Research on the Newest Vital Sign in Children Necessary?

Response:

I certainly agree with Dr. Allen and Ms. Auld that health education for children is important. Indeed, in the past I have made presentations about health topics at my children's schools, and I am always telling my grandchildren about health issues that they should be aware of. I have probably explained health concepts to hundreds (possibly thousands) of children who were my patients. Our overall health and education systems should be doing that as well. Simple, clear explanations are the key.

My only disagreement with Dr. Allen and Ms. Auld is that we should not be spending our time and resources on developing instruments to measure health literacy in children, nor on studies to measure children's health literacy skills. Rather, we should be putting effort into teaching clinicians and others in the health system about how to provide health information in easy-to-understand terms, and not just for children but for their parents too.

Try reading the HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) privacy document you receive

when you check in at a physicians' office or hospital. It does not matter that children cannot understand it. Their parents cannot understand it either, but the problem is not their literacy skills. The problem is the inability of the health system to explain things in normal understandable language.

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