

# Librarians Helping to Combat Organizational Health Literacy Through an Updated Health Literacy Assessment Tool

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**Objective:** Health literacy continues to be a challenge libraries and organizations face. To help address organizational health literacy, the University of Tennessee Medical Center (UTMC) created a Task Force and utilized the *Health Literacy Environment of Hospitals and Health Centers (HLEHHC)* tool to assess UTMC's health literacy attributes. When using this tool, it was discovered that some of the questions needed to be updated. This will discuss the process in which the UTMC Task Force and original author Rima Rudd revised and updated the *HLEHHC* to create the *Health Literacy Environment, version 2 (HLE2)*.

**Methods:** This update was a two year collaborative process. An extensive literature review on health literacy was performed. Each section of the *HLEHHC* was reviewed, as well as each question, leading to question updates and removals. Changes were made to the rating scale to better reflect the questions. The new tool undertook a peer review process, followed by more updates. After those changes were made, the tool was pilot tested. Additional updates were then made based on pilot testing.

**Conclusion:** Through this collaborative process, Rima Rudd and the UTMC Task Force updated the *HLEHHC* to include timely questions and specific directions for use. Librarians are at the forefront helping to address the challenge of organizational health literacy. The *HLE2* is available for use to analyze literacy-related barriers for organizations.

Part 1: Policy			Notes
Criteria	Written No 0	Written Yes 4	
Directions: Indicate whether or not each of the following is documented in written format. If not applicable, please write "N/A" in either the No or Yes column. Enter the number of points earned in the appropriate box.			
1. The strategic plan reviewed by the board of directors includes a reference to becoming a more health literacy organization.			
2. The strategic plan reviewed by the board of directors includes a reference to improving health literacy by reducing literacy related barriers.			
3. The organization includes improved health literacy as part of quality improvements and patient safety goals.			
4. The organization has a committee that includes increasing health literacy by removing literacy related barriers to information and care.			
5. A policy requires that patient satisfaction surveys include at least one question about the quality and availability of health information.			
6. A policy requires that patient satisfaction surveys include at least one question about the communication skills of professional staff.			
<b>Part 1 Policy: Add the yes points for questions 1-6 Total =</b>	0		
<b>Total Number of Items Included</b>	6		
<b>Part 1 Policy % Score</b>	0.00%		

Figure 1. Example of a section of the tool.

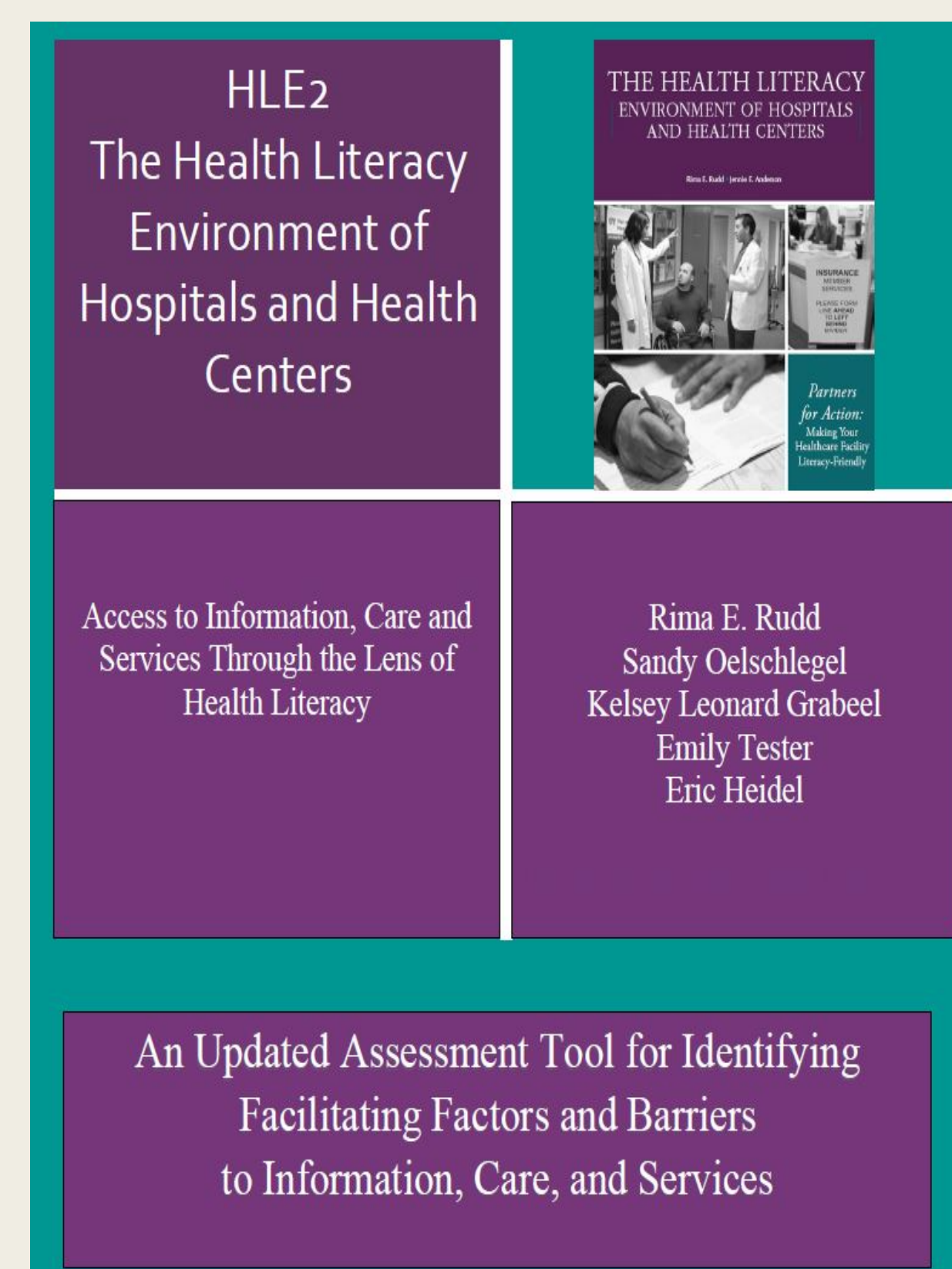


Figure 2. Title Page.

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**Results:** The *HLE2* is composed of five new sections: Organizational Policies, Institutional Practices, Navigation, Culture and Language, and Communication. The rating scale is yes/no as well as a frequency Likert scale. Directions are located at the beginning of each section along with how to score.

Section	% Score	Consider the following values and implications for action for the % score for each section:	
		Score Range	Action to Consider
Organizational Policies	0%		
Part 1: Policy	0%		
Part 2: Policy and Practice	0%		
Institutional Practices	0%		
Part 1: Resources	0%		
Part 2: Orientation, Development, and Expectations	0%		
Orientation	0%		
Development	0%		
Expectations	0%		
Navigation	0%		
Part 1: Arrival	0%		
Arrival and Departure	0%		
Entry and Lobby Access	0%		
Part 2: Wayfinding	0%		
Staff Assistance	0%		
Hallways and Navigation Ease	0%		
Services and Specialty Areas	0%		
Culture & Language	0%		
Communication	0%		
Print Materials	0%		
Forms	0%		
Websites	0%		
Patient Portals	0%		

**Planning for Action**

As we noted in the introduction to the *HLE2* tool, you will find it most helpful to work with and report findings to an existing committee and key administrators. We encourage you to focus on the percentage scores for each section so that you can identify some strengths and weaknesses of your organization, determine priority areas, and generate ideas for action.

It is unlikely that any institution can eliminate all literacy related barriers. However, small improvements can make a difference. Small steps can spur larger action. Small studies can help garner research funds. An action plan for a health literacy initiative must be specific to an organization, should reflect the priorities of the organization, and must, of course, consider costs.

The original *HLE* workbook contained suggestions for and examples drawn from the field for the development of action plans for navigation, print communication, the oral exchange, technology, and policies and protocols [pages 27-62]. The literature in this area has expanded considerably. We provide some key resources in the appendix that follows.

Figure 4. Scoring.

Figure 5. Scoring meanings and planning for action.

**References:**

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