

Assessing Health Literacy Levels in Family Medicine Clinics

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INTRODUCTION

- *Health Literacy* - degree to which a person has the ability to obtain, process and understand health information needed to make appropriate health decisions.
- People with limited literacy have less knowledge about their health problems, higher hospitalization rates, higher health care costs and worse health status than people with adequate literacy.
- Poor health literacy among type 2 diabetics has also been associated with inadequate knowledge of the disease and complications.
- Current research on health literacy has focused on validating instruments.
- More research is needed to assess health literacy in clinics.
- A more adequate understanding on health literacy levels will help health care professionals increase quality of care.

PURPOSE

- Determine the association between health literacy level and sociodemographic factors, health information access, diagnosis of diabetes and internet usage in two family medicine clinics.

METHODS

Study Design: Cross Sectional

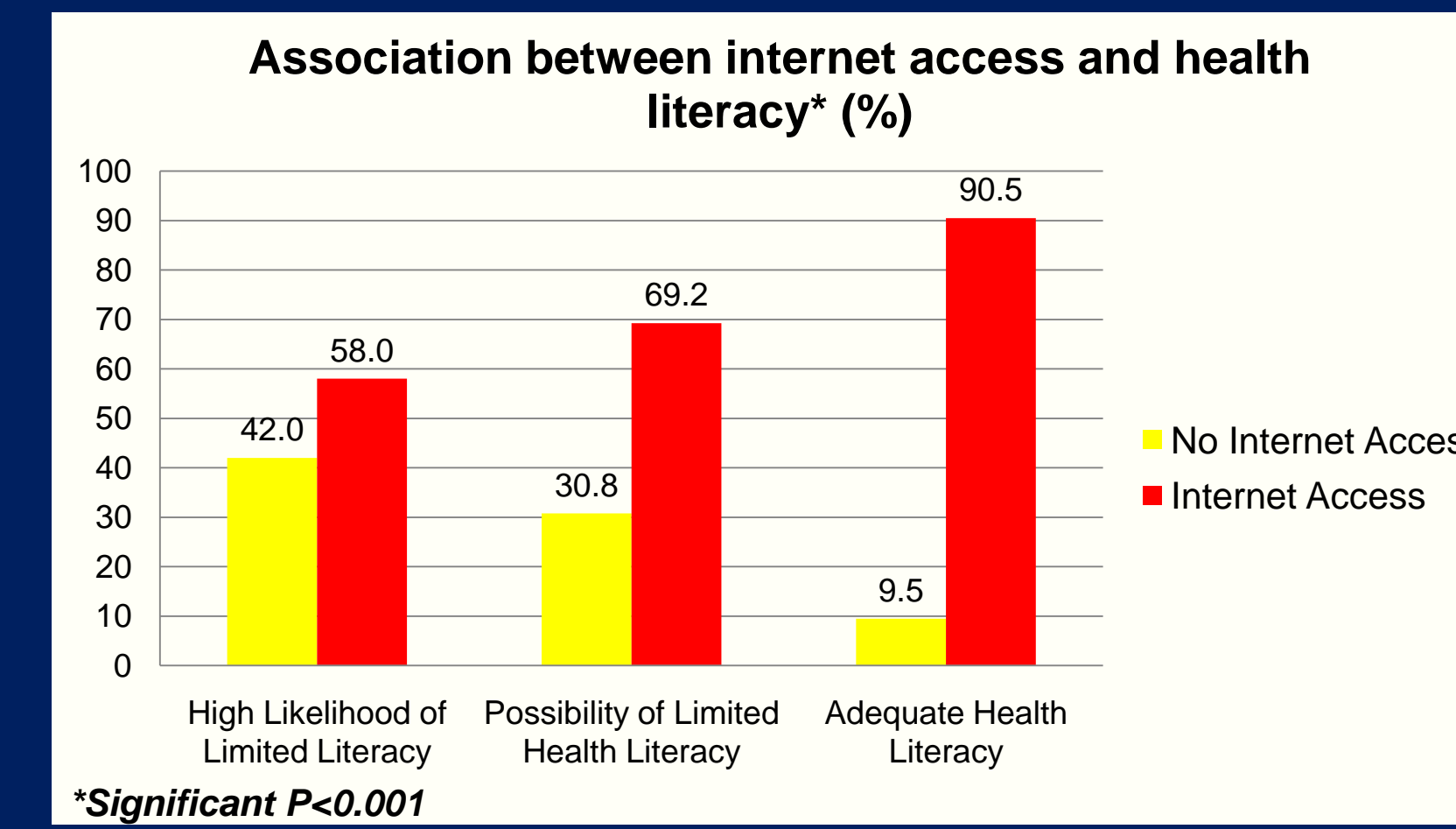
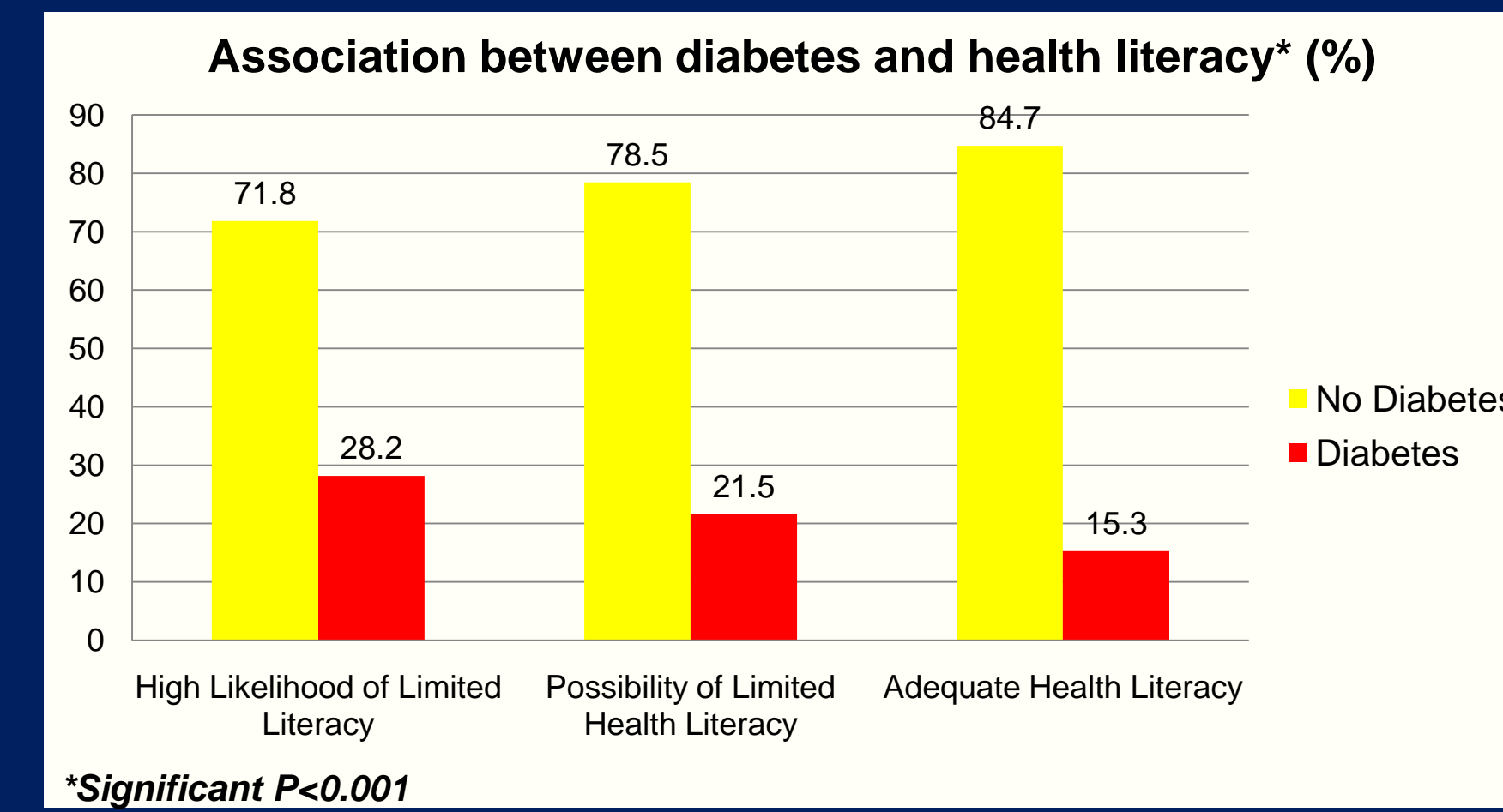
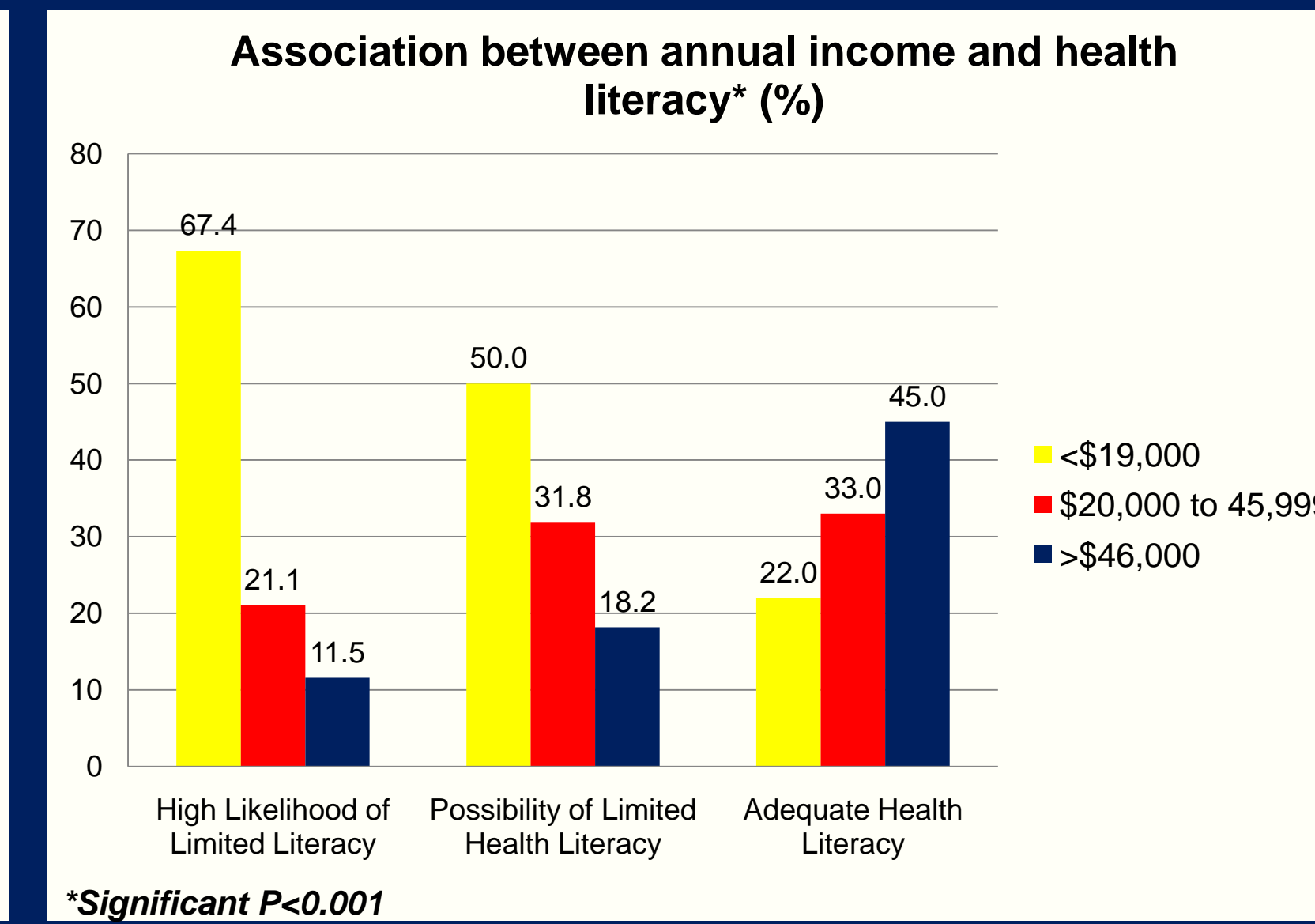
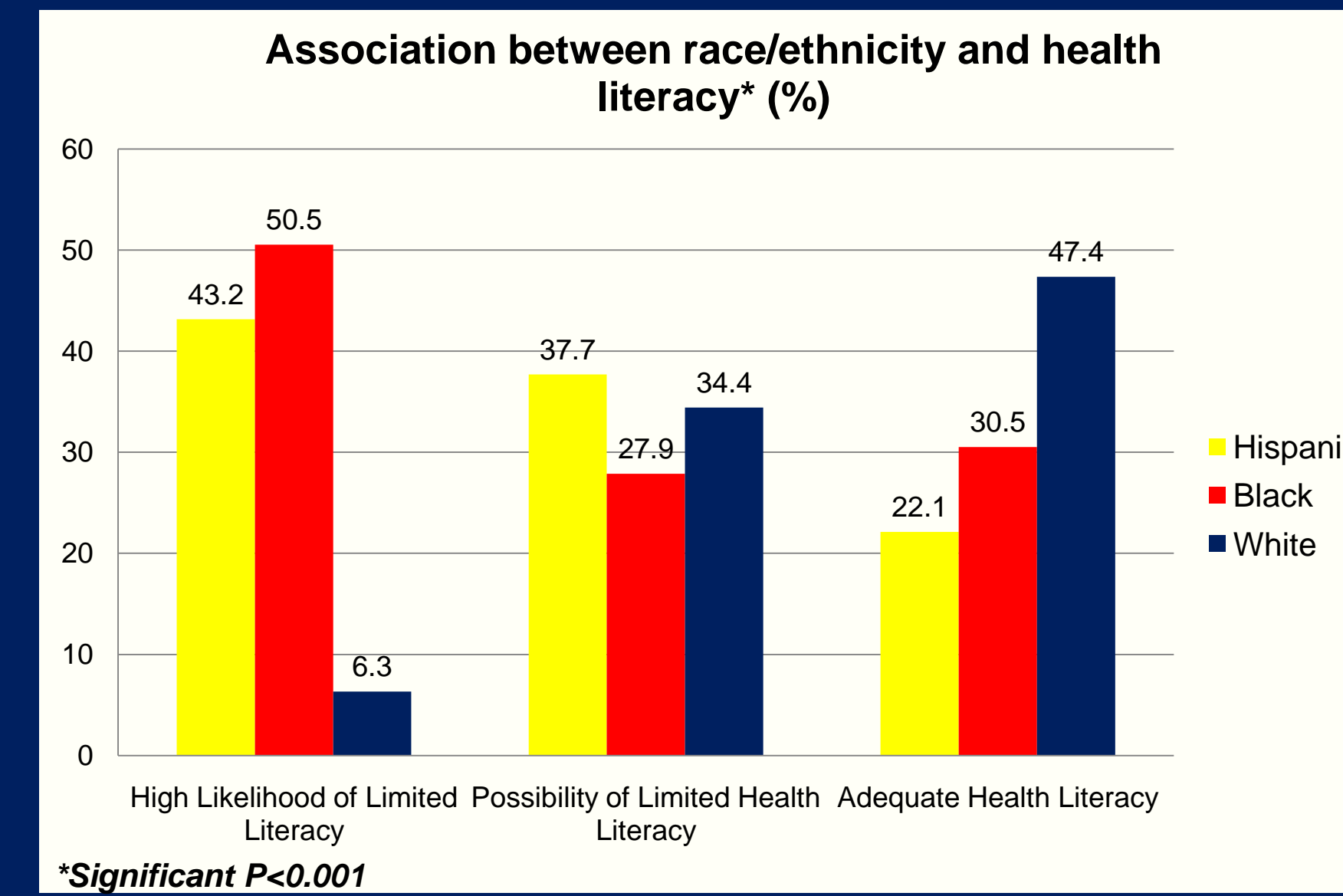
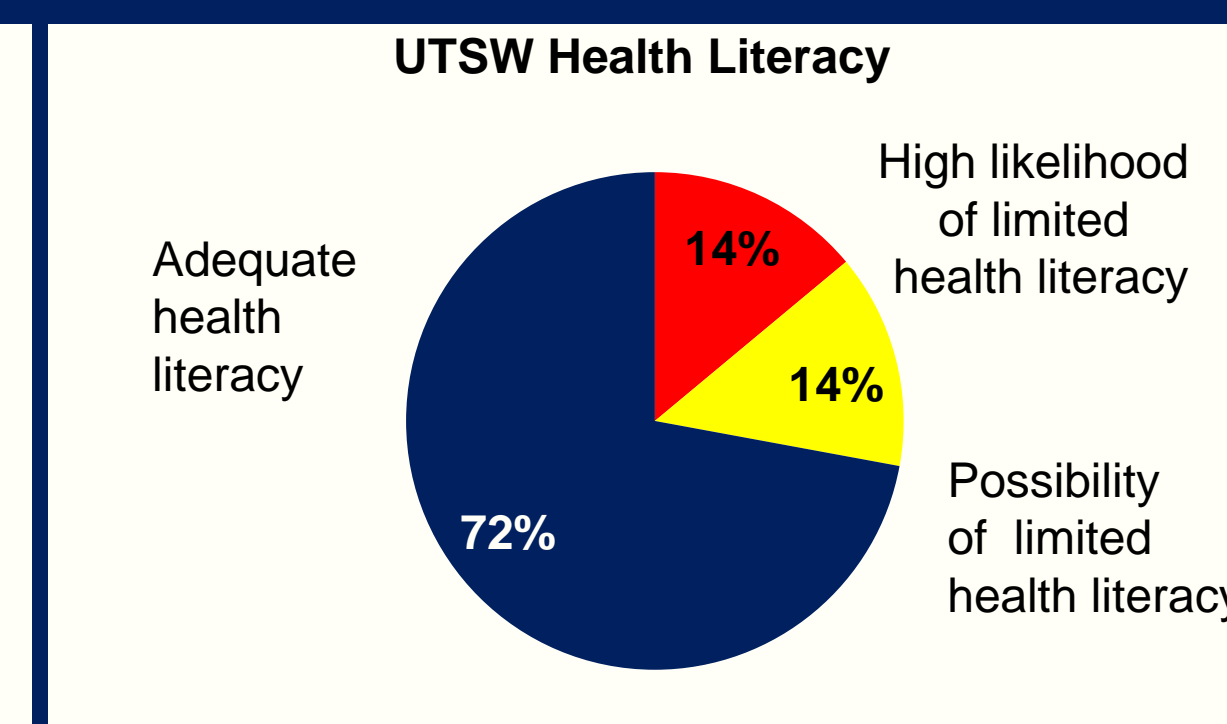
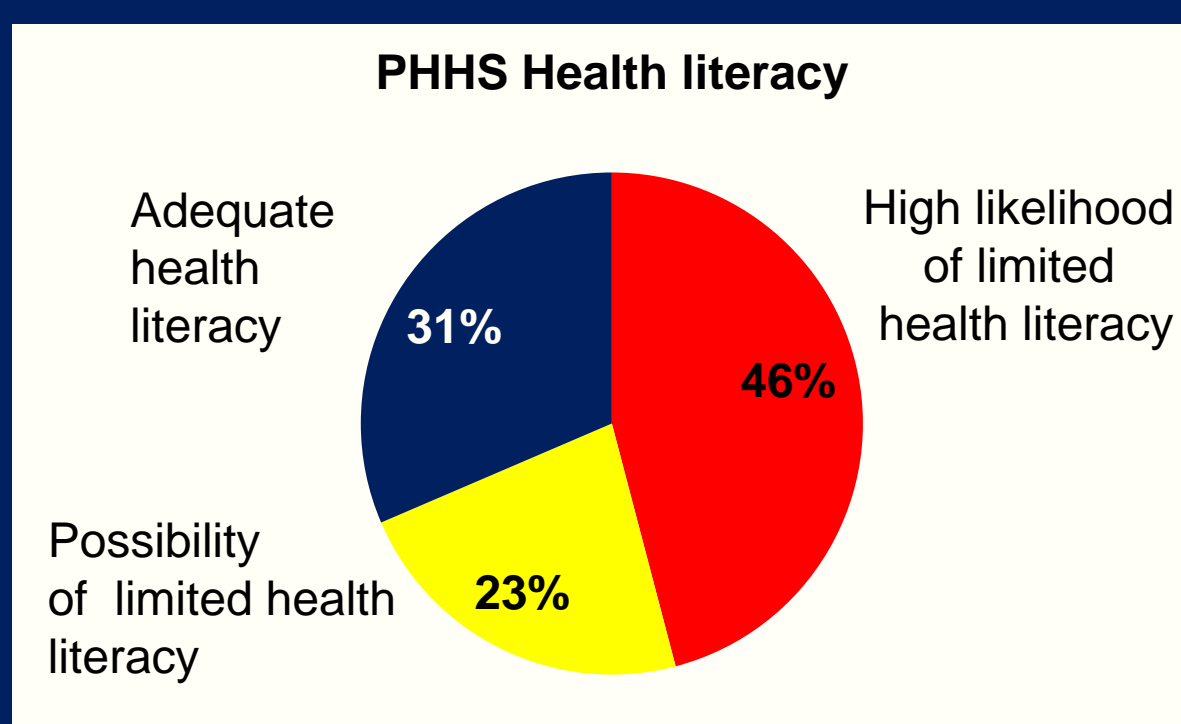
Subjects and Setting: Two family medicine clinics in Dallas, TX from February 2009 - April 2009:

1. UT Southwestern Family Medicine Clinic (UTSW)
2. Parkland Family Medicine Residency Clinic (PHHS)

Outcome Measures: Health literacy level based on the Newest Vital Sign (NVS), presence and type of diabetes, year of birth, gender, race, level of education, type of insurance, annual household income, confidence in filling out medical forms, where is the health information obtained and internet utilization.

RESULTS

Characteristics by clinic	PHHS (%) (n=265)	UTSW (%) (n=233)	p-value
Sex			0.9180
Male	23.8	24.2	
Female	76.2	75.8	
Race			<0.0001
Hispanic	64.0	13.9	
Black	20.8	44.0	
White	15.2	42.1	
Age – Mean (SD)	46.4 (12.9)	42.8 (12.9)	0.0031
Language Preference			<0.0001
English	43.7	97.8	
Spanish	56.3	2.3	
Education			<0.0001
11th grade or less	55.0	4.4	
High School Graduate/ GED	20.6	10.1	
Technical college or college	24.4	85.5	
Income			<0.0001
<\$19,000	83.3	8.9	
\$20,000 to 45,999	14.2	41.1	
≥\$46,000	2.6	50.0	
Diabetes Prevalence	29.9	13.2	<0.0001
Medical forms Confidence			<0.0001
Not confident	8.2	4.4	
Somewhat confident	37.9	20.4	
Very confident	53.9	75.1	
Health information Source			<0.0001
Media (news/radio/books) or family	47.4	38.8	
Internet	4.0	16.7	
Health Care Prof	47.0	38.3	
More than 1 source	2.0	6.2	
No Internet access	60.0	4.9	<0.0001
Health Literacy-Mean (SD)	2.3 (1.99)	4.4 (1.95)	<0.0001



DISCUSSION

- We found a significant difference in health literacy level by clinic.
- We also found significant associations between health literacy and the following: race, language preference, education level, income, medical insurance and diabetes prevalence.
- Understanding health literacy with the NVS will help health care professionals increase quality of care.
- Health care providers need to be more perceptive regarding health literacy, especially in the underserved population with diabetes.
- This knowledge can help providers and the medical system they interact with, tailor their patient education appropriately.
- In our study we found that those that use the internet had a better NVS score than those who didn't, because of this finding patients should be empowered to access and use the internet to obtain health related information.