

Readability of ISUOG patient pamphlets: ensuring accessibility for patient understanding

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EP 17.48

Beth Israel Deaconess
Medical Center



BACKGROUND

The U.K. NHS, U.S. CDC and NIH, recommend that patient materials be in plain language (at or below 8th-grade level) to enhance accessibility and comprehension for a diverse audience.

Accessible healthcare information is a matter of health justice. Complex patient materials require high literacy levels and reinforce disparities.

OBJECTIVE

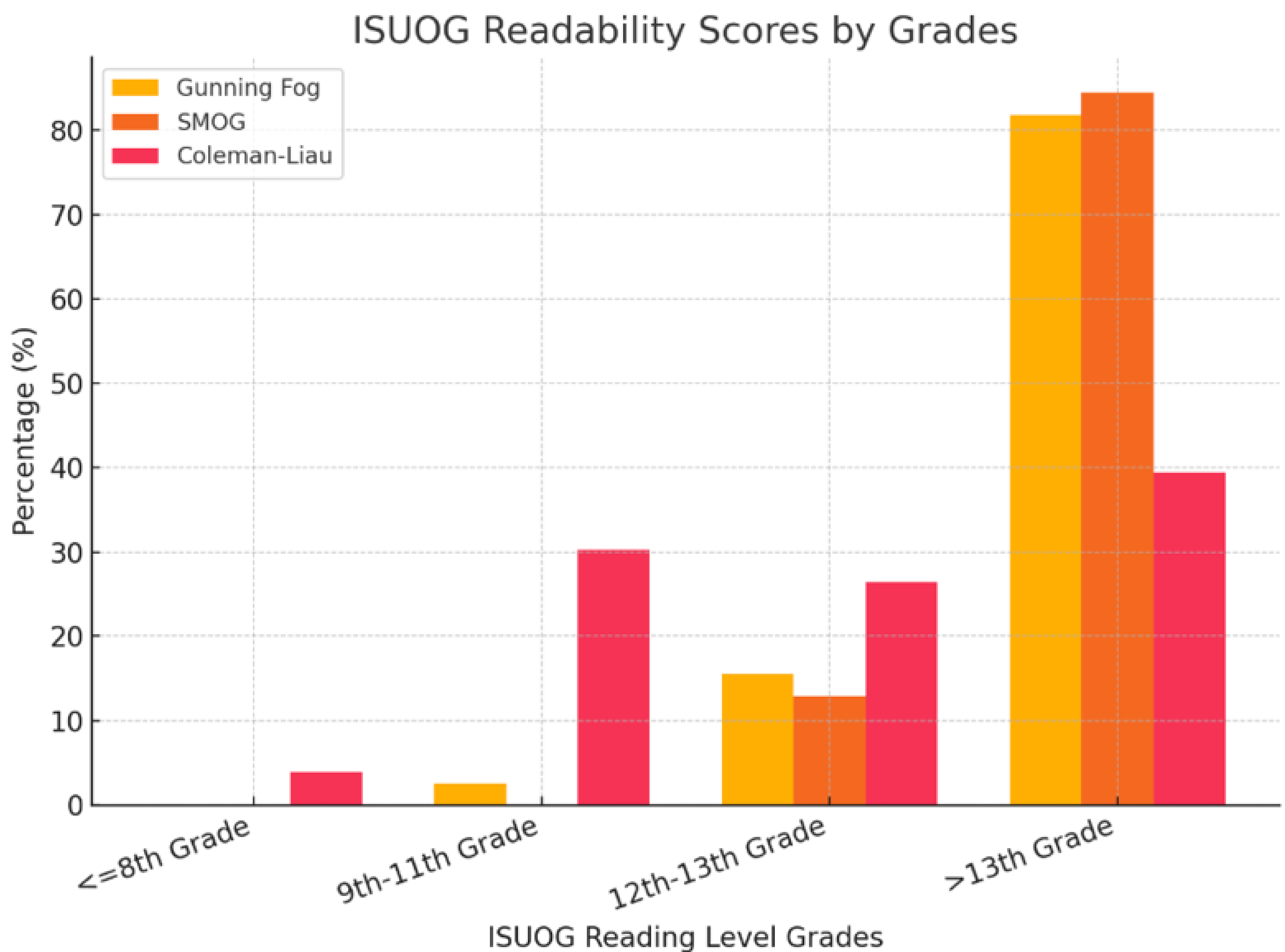
Our objective was to evaluate the readability of medical pamphlets from ISUOG.

METHODS

We analyzed 155 pamphlets of pregnancy-related ultrasound issues from the ISUOG website using the Gunning Fog Index, SMOG Index, Coleman-Liau Readability Formula, and Flesch Reading Ease Score with a software program, Readability Studio, to measure text complexity, We also used the DISCERN tool to evaluate the quality of written health information for patients.

RESULTS

DISCERN analysis showed high scores (4-5/5) for clarity, balanced information, and treatment options. However, only 1/155 pamphlets met plain language standards. Most (124/155, 80%) were written at an **11th grade level or higher**, limiting accessibility for over 80% of patients. Flesch Reading Ease classified 120 (76%) as "Difficult" and 9 (6%) as "Very Difficult," indicating a high level of complexity, with none rated "Fairly Easy" or "Easy".



CONCLUSIONS

- Our study shows that while ISUOG pamphlets are high quality, their complex language limits comprehension for most pregnant women in the U.K. and U.S.
- Health professionals have an ethical duty to ensure patients understand medical information—especially during prenatal ultrasounds, where real-time clarity is crucial.
- Readability is a key social determinant of health; improving it can promote equity and empower all patients to make informed decisions.
- Future ISUOG pamphlets should endeavor to ensure that the language can be read and understood by all patients.