Readability Assessment of Online Patient Education Material on Barrett's Esophagus Across the United States

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Introduction

Health inequality due to low health literacy has been well reported in the literature. Because of this, many organizations have created guidelines and recommendations to help overcome this widespread issue.

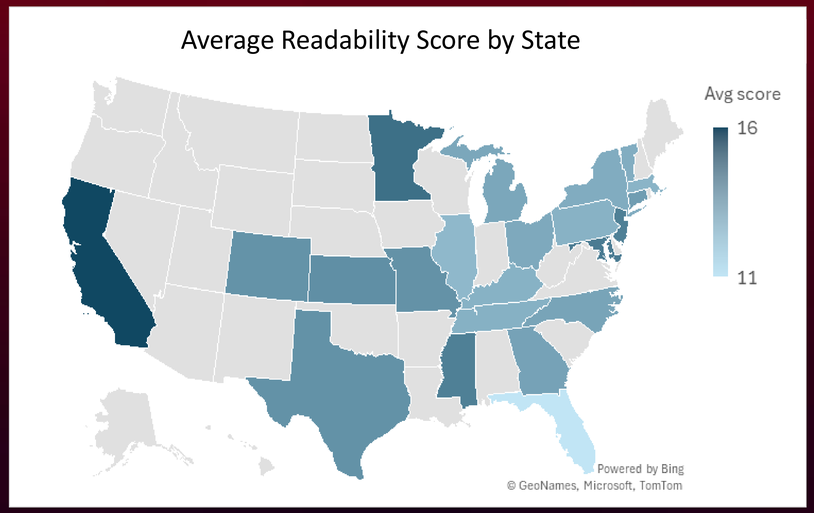
The recommended reading level for patient education material provided by the American Medical Association (AMA) is no greater than the 6th grade level. Multiple studies have been done showing the average reading level for patient education material to be greater than this recommendation.

Methods

In this study, 54 medical centers were identified to have online education materials available for patients related to Barrett's esophagus. The description of Barrett's Esophagus on these websites was analyzed using multiple readability calculators including the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level, the Gunning Fog Score, the Coleman Liau Index, and the Simple Measure of Gobbledygook index.

Results

These results were compared to a grade level value of 6.9 based on the recommendation by the AMA. Using a one sample t-test with a p-value of 0.001, all four calculators were considered statistically significant. Of the 54 websites, only 2 websites had a reading level $\leq$ 6.9. However, this was not consistent across all 4 calculators.



Discussion

Health literacy has been brought to the forefront of medicine to optimize patient understanding. Providing education materials that are at or below the patient's reading level should be standard of care. However, our data shows that the average score for Barrett's esophagus is higher than the recommended score throughout the nation.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant disparity in online patient education materials and the need for improvements with current patient education.

References

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