

Spencer Nice – OHP Reflection Paper

*"Being in the Health Literacy Intensive turned out to be entirely different and nothing like I had expected. My initial thoughts about the HLI were focused around navigating and understanding the labyrinth of the dental and general health networks that exist in our community, culture, and society here in the United States. What I actually came to learn was that Health Literacy is an intricately intertwined part of promoting oral health. By coming to understand how to facilitate the patient experience of the healthcare system using plain language, CLAS standards, and the teach-back method (as well as others), I have found that I am more capable of promoting Oral Health both in a one-on-one situation, as well as on a Public Health spectrum. Using what I've learned from the readings, activities, and discussions in the Health Literacy Intensive, I've already found myself explaining different Oral Health topics with friends and family, constantly keeping these principles in mind.*

*In some ways, it's become more a part of my life than I ever expected it to – which is an unexpectedly wonderful thing. It's almost comical how much people love to talk about their dental experiences or ask questions about dentistry, water fluoridation, or general oral health upon discovering that I'm a dental student. I'm so glad to have taken the Health Literacy Intensive during my first year at Tufts, because I'm able to discuss my education and experiences in a way that both promotes Oral Health and uses the HLI techniques. These conversations also feed into my desire to learn more about patient-provider communication on both the small and large scales because it shows me how much more there is for me to learn. For example, teaching my parents (who are not dentists, by any means) about the importance of water fluoridation after our class mock debate allowed me to employ using the Plain Language practices and the Teach-Back technique.*

*It can sometimes be difficult to switch back and forth between the scientific language of dentistry and oral health and the general everyday language that people use to refer to their mouths, but this has become an overwhelmingly positive reinforcement, reminding me of how important it is to practice this at every chance. I believe that Plain Language is, personally, the most important thing I've taken out of the Health Literacy Intensive and Oral Health Promotions. Being from a multi-lingual upbringing, scientific jargon in different languages has always been a perplexing matter for me. For this reason, I tend to strongly identify with people of lower Health Literacy levels. Although I'm becoming more capable of using scientific language in reference to oral health, this has only become the case with practice. For the general public, I both understand and remember vividly what it is like to not understand the directions that I am being given to better my health. Plain Language is something that I will gladly promote and use as a technique to help others – just because someone (the patient) speaks the same language as you doesn't mean they have the same Health Literacy level as you (the provider). I'm glad to have learned these things and look forward to using them in the future."*