

**Improving the Healthcare of Chicago:
An Interactive
Approach to Reducing Healthcare Disparities**

*A Health Plan approach
Defining the Problem
Identifying Solutions*

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**Disclosure of Conflict of Interest
Information**

**I have no existing conflict of information
to disclose**

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Health Care Disparities in America: How Are We Addressing Them?



Defining the Problems



What is Health Literacy ?

“The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.”

Literacy and Health

People with limited literacy skills...

- Report poorer overall health
- Are less likely to make use of screenings
- Are more likely to be hospitalized
- Present in later stages of disease
- Have poorer understanding of treatment
- Have lower adherence to medical regimens

New York Area Libraries Health Literacy Conference, 2002

Low Health Literacy Affects Physician's Practices

- You may not know that patients with poor health literacy skills are in your care because they use well-practiced coping mechanisms that effectively mask their problem
- They are often ashamed to admit they have difficulty understanding information and instruction

Partnership for Clear Health Communication

Identifying Solutions



What Physicians Can Do?

6 Steps to Improving Patient Understanding

- 1. Limit the amount of information provided at each visit
- 2. Slow down
- 3. Avoid medical jargon
- 4. Use pictures/models to explain important concepts
- 5. Assure understanding with the “show-me” technique
- 6. Encourage patients to ask questions
- 7. Ensure availability translation services

Examples of Medical Jargon Simplified

*Instead of
Using This Word*

*Consider Using
This One
Instead*

Benign

Harmless

Chronic

Happens again and again; does not end

Cardiac

Heart

Edema

Swelling; build up of fluid

Fatigue

Tired

Screening

Test

Intake

What you eat or drink

Generic

Not a brand name

Adverse events

Side effects

What Is *Ask Me 3* ?

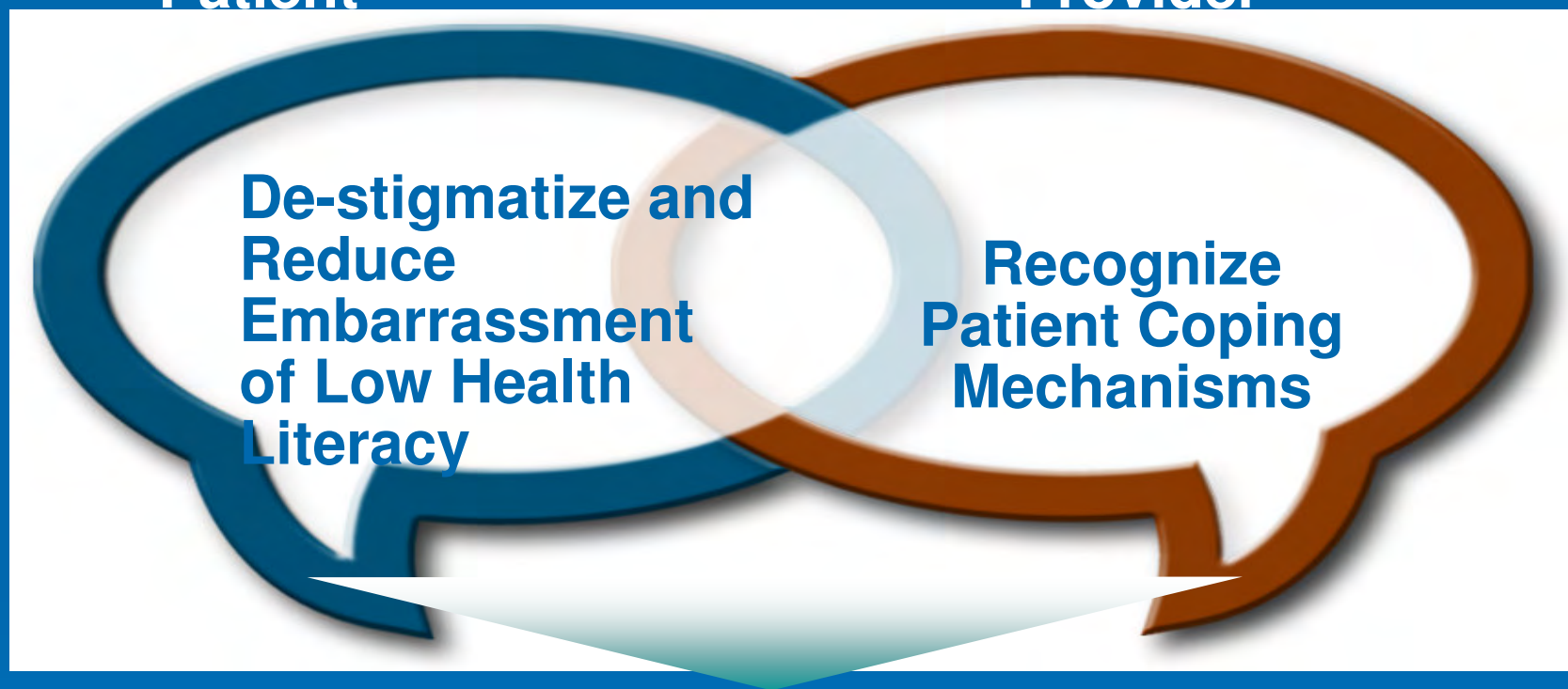
- Promotes three simple, but essential, questions and answers for every healthcare interaction:



Ask Me 3 – Creates Shared Responsibility for Clear Health Communication

Patient

Provider



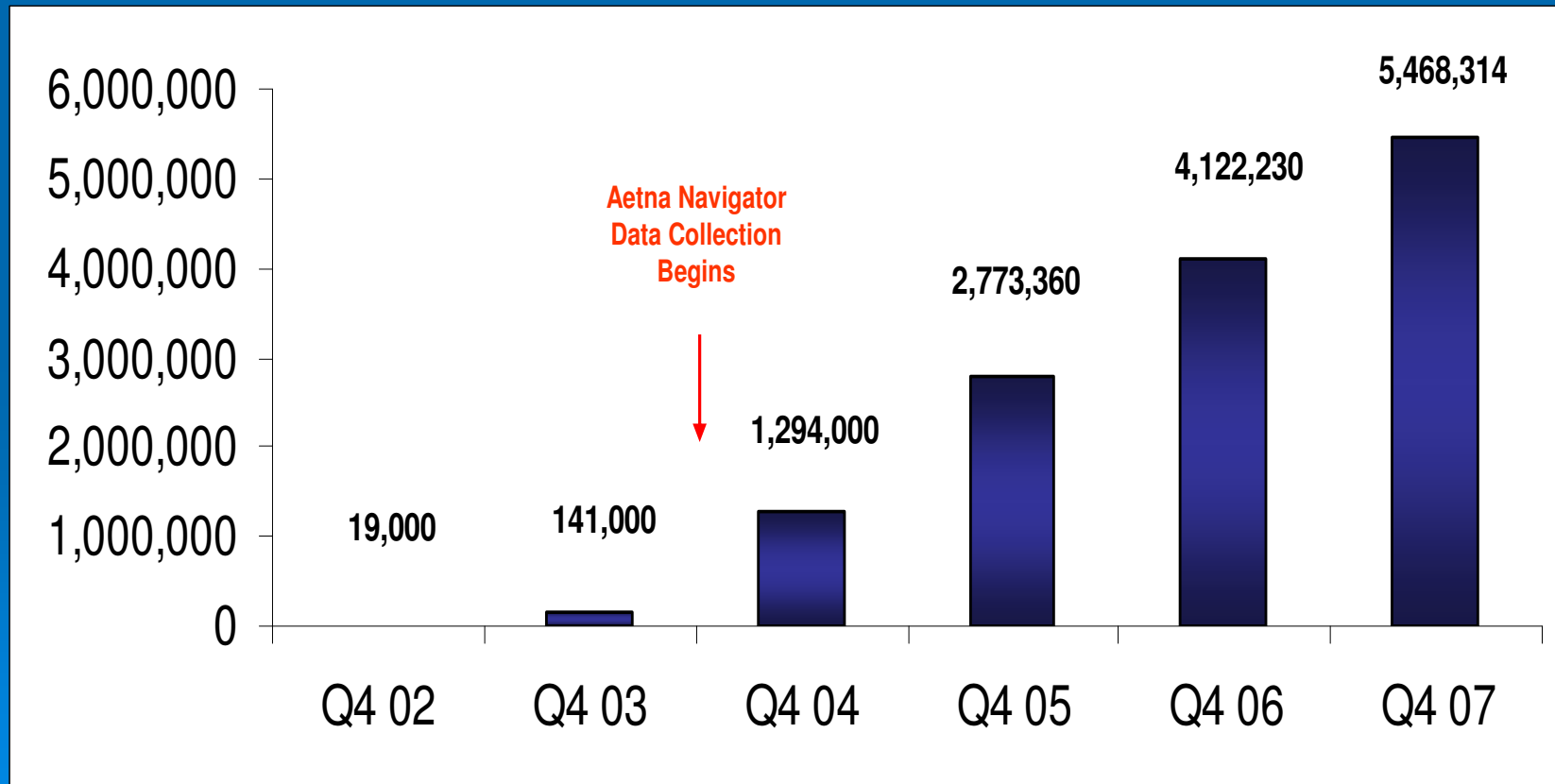
- Provides a consistent approach to patient-provider dialogue
- Allows patients to get information they need to manage their health
- Time-efficient for providers to reinforce healthcare instructions

What Aetna has done

- Collecting member data
- Targeting at-risk groups ~ putting data to work
 - Breast Health Ethnic Disparity Initiative
 - African-American Hypertension Initiative
- Cultural competency training for Aetna health care professionals
- Philanthropic initiatives through the Aetna Foundation

Collecting Member Data

To obtain an accurate view of our membership in order to develop programs and services to meet their diverse needs



Cultural Competency Training

Goals

- Deepen Aetna clinical community's understanding of disparities among racial and ethnic groups
- Provide ongoing education on cultural competency in health care for Aetna Clinicians and other health care providers

Results

- Over 2,000 Aetna Clinicians have completed training
- Pre- and post-test scores show significant increase of knowledge

The Health Literacy Workgroup



Background

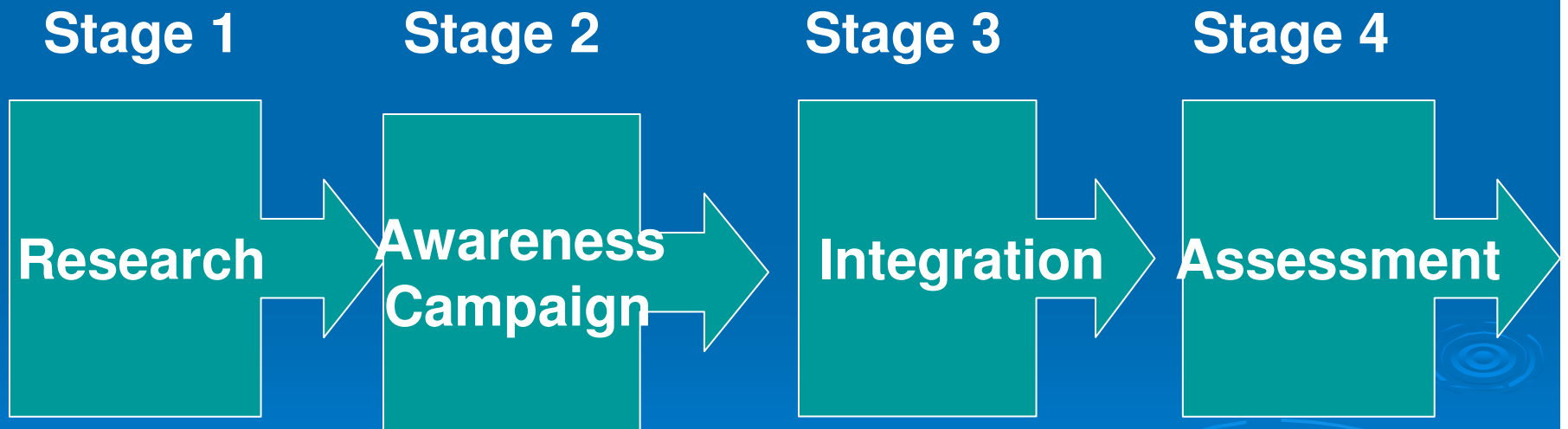
➤ 2005 Informal Work Group

- Health Literacy identified as an important issue affecting multiple departments within Aetna and how these groups interact with doctors and patients.

January 2006 Formal Work Group established with QM as the Project Managers.

- Group met monthly with multiple departmental representation.
- Subgroups formed to address 3 primary audiences (Members, providers and internal Aetna employees)

Health Literacy Workgroup Strategy



Goals and Objectives

Learn more about the impact of health literacy on patients' understanding of health information and health outcomes, increase overall awareness of the issue and provide tools/resources.

Learn more about health literacy through research and analysis.

Increase awareness across multiple audiences (members, physicians and internal Aetna employees)

Provide tools to providers and internal Aetna employees to assist with addressing the health literacy issue.

Health Literacy Asthma Outcomes Study

Goal: To have a positive impact on the health outcomes of members with poor asthma control by the use of plain language asthma educational materials .

Health Literacy Asthma Outcomes Study

- Focus groups to review pamphlets/CD and knowledge assessment questionnaire
- Identification of study participants:
 - Poor asthma control: controller/rescue medications
 - ED visits, inpatient admissions, office visits
 - Pre- and Post-Intervention questionnaire at 6 month interval
 - Data analysis at 12 months

2007-2008 Initiatives

- Partnering with Johnson & Johnson to improve the diabetic control in the Latino population
- Partnering with GlaxoSmithKline to improve health literacy for Aetna members with diagnosis of asthma
- Translation of Member Health Education reminders from English to Spanish
 - Numbers to know
 - Childhood immunizations

2007-2008 Initiatives cont.

- Plan for your health Consumer education campaign. Planforyourhealth.com
- Hable con su Medico Campaign
- **Insure Your Health: Resources for Helping the Uninsured find Free or Low-Cost Health Insurance Programs**
- Team up for a healthy tomorrow

Philanthropic Initiatives through the Aetna Foundation

➤ **Morehouse School of Medicine**

- “Improving Diabetes Care Through Technology and Infrastructure Enhancement” to improve diabetes care among low-income, inner city adults

➤ **College of New Rochelle**

- “Weight and Wellness Module Education” program to provide access to timely information about health risks associated with obesity and help foster healthy lifestyle choices among students

➤ **Centre for Asian and Pacific Islanders**

- “First Words for Family Health” program to help limited and non-English speaking immigrants and refugees to safely utilize and understand American health care

What Aetna is doing

- Collection voluntary self-identified race, ethnicity and language preference.
- Created Health Literacy Workgroup
- Developed Cultural competency training programs and seminars for employees and providers.
- Implemented culturally appropriate disease and case management methods. Ex: Beginning RightSM maternity program
- Public education campaigns: Magic Johnson Enterprises "Team Up For a Healthy Tomorrow." , Plan for your health, Speak to your doctor
- Through the Aetna Foundation, Aetna also has committed more than \$15 million since 2001 to support programs that address racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

What Physicians can do

- Use Simple health information at or below 6th grade reading level
- Speaking slowly
- Assess patient literacy skills, using “living room” language and “teach-back” methods to confirm patient comprehension.
- Ensure translation services are available

Q&A

