

RESOLUTION 80-09A

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3 **Title:** Improving Patients’ Understanding of Prescription Medication
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5 **Introduced by:** Joseph Mark Tuthill, MD, for the Wayne County Delegation
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7 **Original Author:** Barbara Meyer Lucas, MD
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9 **Referred to:** Reference Committee D
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11 **House Action:** Adopted as Amended
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14 **Whereas, it has been shown in the National Assessment of Adult Literacy**
15 **Survey of 2003 that as many as 89 million Americans (41 percent of adults) may**
16 **have difficulty with health literacy (understanding and acting on health care**
17 **information),¹ and**

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19 **Whereas, health literacy becomes more of a problem as the population**
20 **ages,² and**

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22 **Whereas, low literacy is associated with a greater rate of poor medication**
23 **adherence,³ and**

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25 **Whereas, studies have shown that patients’ retention of medical advice may**
26 **decrease rapidly after they leave the health care setting⁴, and**

27
28 **Whereas, including the purpose or indication for a medication in the “Sig”**
29 **portion of a prescription medications label may help patients correctly take their**
30 **medication at home, and increase their compliance with taking the medication,**
31 **and**

32
33 **Whereas, the Veterans Administration medical providers already use this**
34 **format, as they include the purpose or indication for the medication on**
35 **prescriptions that they write (e.g., “Lovastatin, 40 mg, 1 tab each evening for**
36 **cholesterol; therefore be it**

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38 **RESOLVED: That MSMS encourage physicians to include, as appropriate,**
39 **the purpose or indication for the medication in the “Sig” portion of prescriptions**
40 **they write to help improve patient safety, understanding, and compliance unless**
41 **the patient objects to having this information on the label.**

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45 **WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE: NONE**

References:

- 1. Weiss, Barry, MD: “Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Your Patients Understand”, AMA Foundation, 2nd Edition, 2007, p. 10

2. **National Network of Libraries of Medicine:**
<http://nnlm.gov/outreach/consumer/hlthlit.html>; last updated June 2008;
access date March 10, 2009.
3. **Dalt, Darren a., Berkman, Nancy D., Sheridan, Stacy, et al “Literacy and health outcomes: A systematic review of the literature,” *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, Volume 19, December 2004: 1228-1239**
4. **Patient Comprehension of Emergency Department Care and Instructions: Are Patients Aware of When They Do Not Understand?**
Kirsten G. Engel, Michele Heisler, Dylan M. Smith, Claire H. Robinson, Jane H. Forman, Peter A. Ubel
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