

# Health Literacy Needs of Older Chinese Americans

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## Background

- ❖ Health literacy, “an individual’s ability to obtain and understand healthcare information to make appropriate health decisions,” plays an important role in health care outcomes (AHRQ 2011).
- ❖ Chinese constitute 24% of all Asians Americans and are the largest Asian group in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2010).
- ❖ Limited information is available on health literacy needs among the fast-growing group of older Chinese American adults.

## Study Aims

- ❖ To assess health literacy among older Chinese American adults.
- ❖ To identify correlates associated with limited health literacy in this population.

## Methods

- ❖ A convenience sample of 312 Chinese American immigrants
- ❖ Age range -- 50 to 75
- ❖ Enrolled in an on-going RCT “Healthy Living” testing the use of lay health worker outreach to promote colorectal cancer screening and healthy nutrition
- ❖ Self-administered baseline questionnaire

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Healthy Living  
Chinese Lay Health Worker Outreach Project

### Assessment of Health Literacy

- ❖ Health literacy was assessed using the Single Item Literacy Screener (SILS), Morris et al., 2006
- ❖ Using a 5-point Likert scale, from 1(never) to 5 (always), the SILS identifies individuals with limited reading ability who need help reading health related information.
- ❖ We defined respondents as having ‘limited health literacy’ when they indicated “sometimes,” “often,” or “always” on the SILS.



How often do you need to have someone help you when you read instructions, pamphlets, or other written material from your doctor or pharmacy?

當你閱讀從醫生或藥房獲得的說明書，小冊子，或任何其他書面資料時，你是否需要人幫助？

## Results

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (N=312)

Female	77.2%	Years in U.S. (SD)	17.3 (12.2)
Age 60+	71.2%	Ethnicity of primary care physician (PCP)	
Limited English (speaks English less well)	94.5%	No PCP	14.5%
Education: less than high school	69.9%	Chinese	68.1%
Below poverty level: < \$20K	58.7%	Non-Chinese	17.4%
Perceived health as fair or poor	67.3%	Ever needed interpreter at medical visit	32.1%

Figure 1. Proportions of respondents reported limited health literacy, requiring assistance to read written health information by selected characteristics

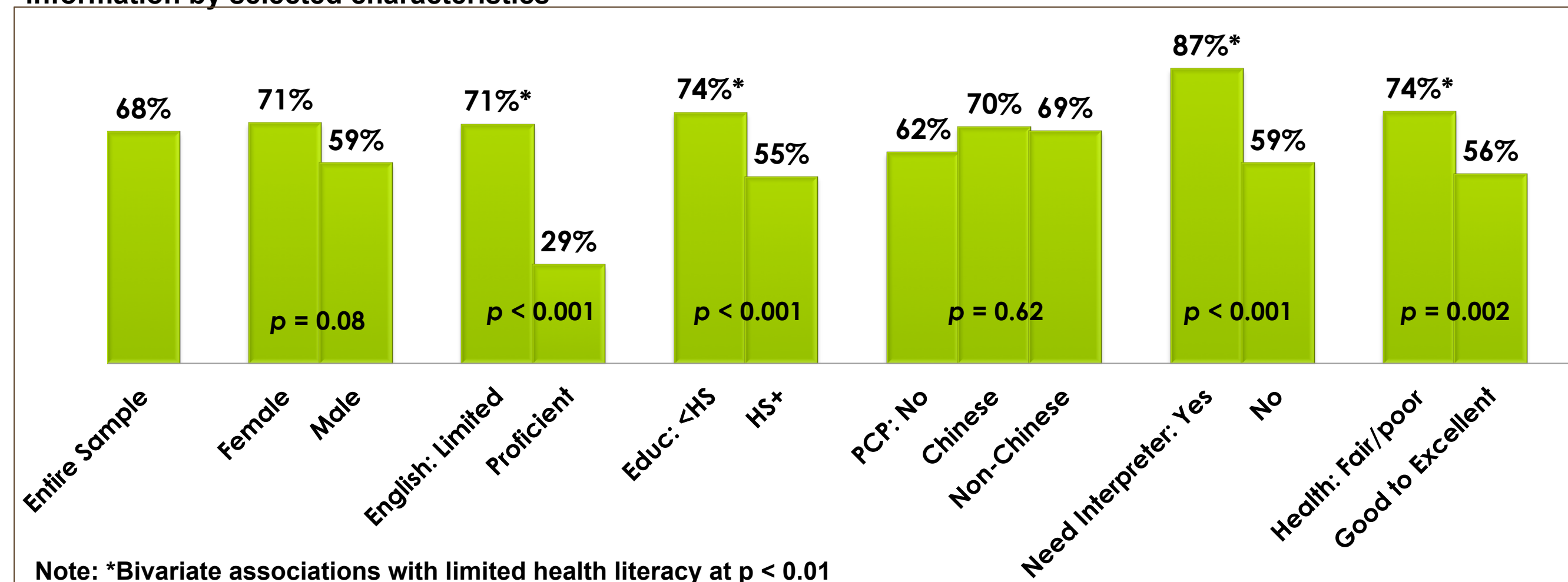


Table 2. Multiple Logistic Regression Model: Significant Correlates of Limited Health Literacy

Significant Correlates	Odds ratio (95% CI)
Needed Medical Interpreter (Ref: No)	5.98 (2.84 – 12.59)
General Health Perceived as Fair or Poor (Ref: Good to Excellent)	1.92 (1.07 – 3.43)

Note: Covariates adjusted in the model: Age, Gender, English Proficiency, Education, Income, Years in the U.S., and PCP ethnicity

## Conclusions

- ❖ Two-thirds of older Chinese American immigrants have limited health literacy, requiring assistance to read written health information.
- ❖ Needing a medical interpreter and poor perceived health were independently associated with limited health literacy.
- ❖ Further research is warranted to understand and address the high health literacy need in older Chinese American immigrants.

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