

RAPID ESTIMATE OF ADULT LITERACY IN MEDICINE (REALM) Examiner's Instruction Sheet

Terry Davis, PhD, Michael Crouch, MN, Sandy Long, PhD

The Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM) is a screening instrument to assess an adult patient's ability to read common medical words and lay terms for body parts and illnesses. It is designed to assess medical professionals in estimating a patient's literacy level so that the appropriate level of patient education materials or oral instructions may be used. The test takes two to three minutes to administer and score. The REALM has been correlated with other standardized tests (Family Medicine, 1993: 25:391-5).

Directions to the Examiner:

1. Examiner should say to the patient:
"This survey is to help us figure out the best type of patient education materials to give you. The survey only takes 2 to 3 minutes to do"
2. Give the patient a laminated copy of the "REALM" Patient Word List.
3. Examiner should hold an unlaminated "REALM" Score Sheet on a clipboard at an angle so that the patient is not distracted by your scoring procedure.
4. Examiner should say:
"I want to hear you read as many words as you can from this list. Begin with the first word on List 1 and read aloud. When you come to a word you cannot read, do the best you can or say "blank" and go on to the next word."
5. If the patient takes more than five seconds on a word say "blank" and point to the next word, if necessary, to move the patient along. If the patient begins to miss every word; have him/her pronounce only known words.
6. Count as an error any word not attempted or mispronounced. Score by:
 - ◆ (/) after each mispronounced word.
 - ◆ (-) after each word not attempted.
 - ◆ (+) after each word pronounced correctly.
7. Count the number of correct words for each list and record the numbers in the "SCORE box. Total the numbers and match the total score with its grade equivalent in the table below.
8. Record the "Realm" generated reading level on the Examiner's Score Sheet and in the Education/Learning History section of the Social and Patient Education History assessment form in the Medical Record.

GRADE EQUIVALENT

| Raw Score | Grade Range | |
|-----------|---|---|
| 0-18 | 3rd Grade and Below | Will not be able to read most low literacy materials; will need repeated oral instructions, materials composed primarily of illustrations, or audio or video tapes. |
| 19-44 | 4th to 6th Grade | Will need low literacy materials; may not be able to read prescription labels. |
| 45-60 | 7th to 8th Grade | Will struggle with most patient education materials. |
| 61-66 | High School | Will be able to read most patient education materials. |