

# Skills for Health Care Access and Navigation

## Session One Materials

### Materials and Preparation

- The DVD, *In Plain Language*, is located in the front pocket of the study circle binder
- DVD player
- Newsprints (flip charts) and Markers
- Overhead projector (optional)

### Newsprints (flip charts) or overhead transparencies (4)

The following pages should be prepared on newsprint (flip charts) or copied on overhead transparencies. In the session notes we typically refer to these materials as newsprints but feel free to use overhead transparencies instead. Examples of most newsprints are included in the session booklet.

To be prepared ahead	To be completed during the session
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Study Circle+ Graphic</li><li>• Discussion Questions for <i>In Plain Language</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why Health Literacy Is Important for ABE/ESOL Students</li><li>• Our Challenges and Barriers in Health Care Access and Navigation</li></ul>

### Handouts (7)

Make copies of all the handouts before the session begins.

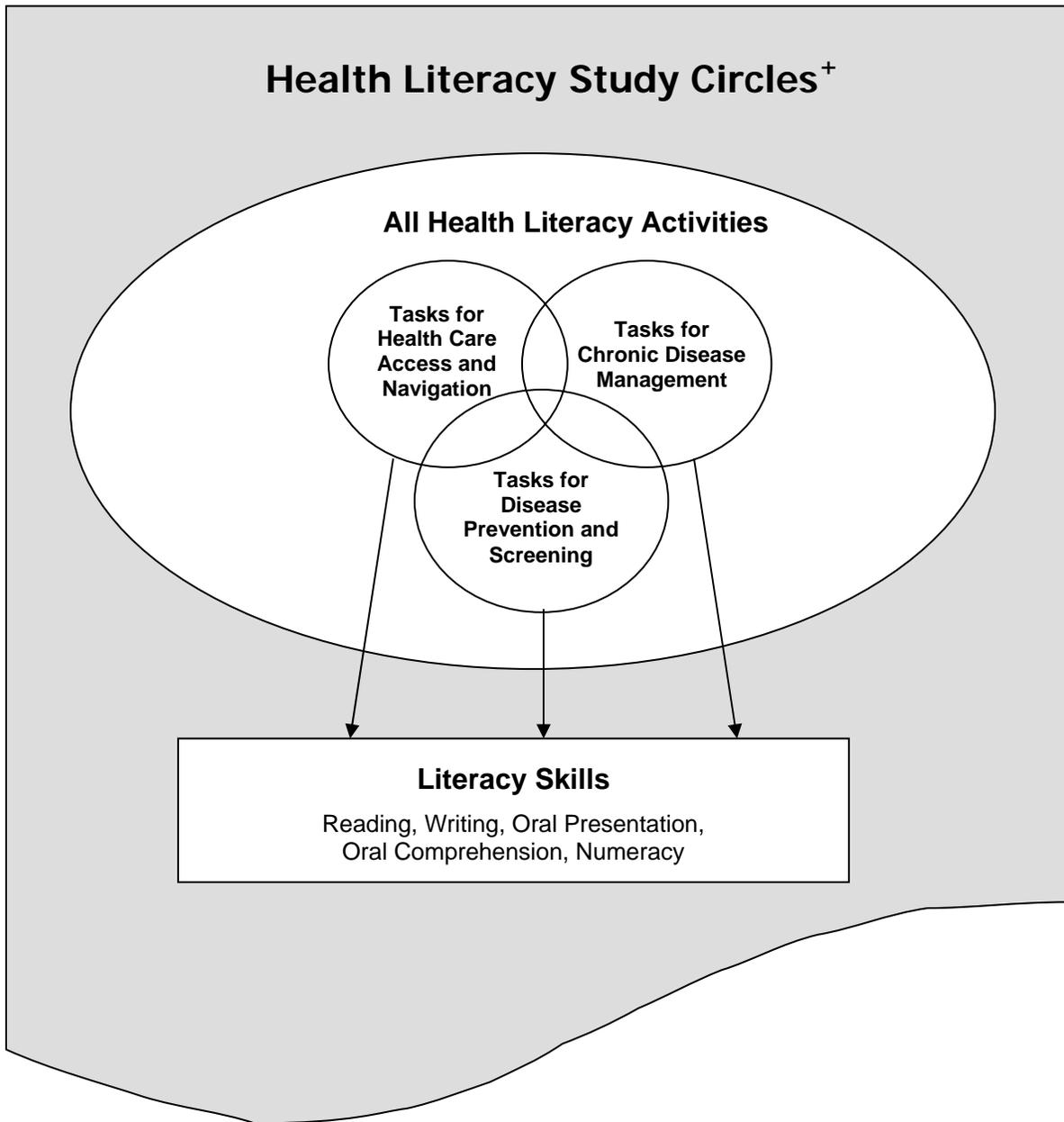
1. Participant Contact List (ask participants to fill in the information and then copy and distribute the list to everyone)
2. Shared Goals but Different Roles in Health Literacy
3. Session One Objectives and Agenda
4. The In-Class Needs Assessment Packet includes the following materials:
  - Identifying Student Barriers to Health Care Access and Navigation
  - After Conducting the Needs Assessment
  - Lesson Companion to “A Simple Test”
  - “A Simple Test - A Story”
  - “A Simple Test” - Questions to think about
  - Alternate Assessment Activity with Photographs
5. Session One Evaluation Form

### Sent out before Session One:

6. Skills for Health Care Access and Navigation: Goals and Objectives
7. Participants’ Definitions of Health Literacy



# Study Circle+ Graphic









## Shared Goals but Different Roles in Health Literacy

### What medical professionals should do...



- Make health care services and resources available
- Offer and explain appropriate screening procedures
- Diagnose illnesses and develop a plan for patient care
- Prescribe medicines and explain their purposes and side effects
- Teach patients how to use medical tools, such as inhalers and glucose meters
- Suggest measures to protect individual and family health

### What adult educators can do...



- Enhance students' ability to complete forms, make inquiries for information and navigate new environments
- Teach students to ask questions about tests, test procedures, and results
- Develop students' capacity to participate in planning by seeking clarification and offering suggestions
- Teach students how to read medicine labels, calculate amounts and timing of dosages
- Strengthen students' ability to read charts and scales and interpret ranges
- Help students learn to locate information to guide their health-related decisions



# Skills for Health Care Access and Navigation

## Session One

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### Objectives

During Session One, participants will:

- Develop a shared definition of “health literacy”
- Identify different types of navigation activities
- List literacy-related barriers to successful access of and navigation in health care systems

### Agenda

#### ***Introductory Activities (40 minutes)***

- Welcome and Introductions
- Review Study Circle+ Goals, Objectives, and Agenda
- Overview of the Health Literacy Study Circles+

#### ***Discussion & Analysis Activities (1 hour, 30 minutes)***

- Reflect on Health Literacy Readings
- - Take a 10-Minute Break -
- View and Discuss *In Plain Language* (Video or DVD)
- Reflection and Discussion of Our Own Experiences

#### ***Planning Activities (30 minutes)***

- Prepare for the In-Class Needs Assessment Activity (“A Simple Test”)

#### ***Closure Activities (20 minutes)***

- Session Review and Evaluation



## **In-Class Needs Assessment Packet**

The In-Class Needs Assessment includes the following materials:

- Identifying Student Barriers to Health Care Access and Navigation
- After Conducting the Needs Assessment
- Lesson Companion to “A Simple Test”
- “A Simple Test” - A Story with a Photograph
- “A Simple Test” - Questions to think about
- Alternate Assessment Activity with Photographs

### **Assignment**

Use this activity in your classroom to learn more about your students' experiences with the health care system and to help you identify the challenges and barriers your students encounter.

Talk with your study circle partner between sessions:

- Discuss the assignment and any problems you anticipate
- Discuss how the assessment went with your students
- Share your findings and observations



## **Identifying Student Barriers to Health Care Access and Navigation**

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### **Note to participant**

You are asked to carry out the attached lesson with your students in the time between Session One and Session Two of the Study Circle<sup>+</sup>. The lesson, created as a story-based reading activity, is meant to serve as a needs assessment tool to enable you to learn more about your students' experiences with the health care system, including their challenges and barriers to effective navigation.

### **What is a needs assessment?**

A needs assessment identifies needs in relation to an issue or service. Many assessments identify “felt needs” and pose the question: *What do you need in relation to a particular issue?* Some assessments identify needs as perceived by an outside observer or professional: *Given what I have observed, X is missing in this community or Y is very hard for most people.*

In this case, you are asked to conduct a needs assessment to find out “what’s going on” with your students’ interactions with the health care system, specifically their challenges and barriers accessing and navigating the system. The term “needs assessment” typically implies that we are looking for students’ needs or identifying problems in the students’ experiences. Another way to think about this needs assessment activity is to think of yourself as conducting an “inventory” of your students’ health care experiences to get insights into their strengths and needs in navigating the health care system.

### **Before conducting the needs assessment**

We strongly recommend that you carefully read the story and review the lesson guide. You are encouraged to modify the lesson to suit your classroom needs. The lesson guide features several suggestions for modifying the lessons for students at varying reading levels and English proficiency.

You may also call your study circle partner to discuss the needs assessment and any issues you have with modifying it for your students.







## Identifying Student Barriers to Health Care Access and Navigation: Lesson Companion to “A Simple Test”

### Navigation Tasks Addressed in this Lesson

- Learners will identify barriers to health care system navigation, such as problems with physically navigating a hospital or completing health care forms.
- Learners will identify possible strategies in overcoming barriers to health care system navigation.

### Skills Focus

- Learners will also develop vocabulary for describing feelings and for navigating hospitals.
- Learners will practice using comprehension strategies, such as predicting and interpreting.

### ABE/ESOL Level

- Pre-GED or advanced ESOL

### Duration

- 2 hours

### Materials

- “A Simple Test” – A Story
- Guiding Questions
- Newsprint and markers

### Key Vocabulary

Appointment  
 Barriers  
 Cardiovascular  
 Coping strategies  
 Insurance form  
 Main entrance  
 Maze  
 Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)  
 Obstacles  
 Overwhelmed  
 Radiology  
 Resident

### Purpose

This story, “A Simple Test,” is to be used as a prompt to facilitate discussion in the ABE/ESOL classroom about the obstacles to successfully navigating health care systems. In this way, the story serves as “a way in” or a “discussion trigger.” By reading about and analyzing one woman’s experiences navigating the health care system, learners will begin to reflect upon and analyze their own navigation experiences. Teachers will be able to identify health literacy issues that learners face as they navigate the health care system. The learner feedback and responses to the reading activity will inform teachers’ subsequent lessons related to this issue.

### Steps

1. *Pre-reading Activity.* Write the story title, “A Simple Test,” on the board. Tell the students that the day’s lesson will focus on a short story with the title “A Simple Test.”

Explain to the students:

“This is the title of a short story we’re going to read. The story is about a woman named Mary and her experiences going to a hospital. Can you guess what the story is about based on the title?”

Ask for volunteers to share their ideas. Write all predictions on the board. (See the teaching tips at the end of the guide for more ideas for pre-reading activities.)

2. *Reading the story.* Distribute the story, “A Simple Test,” to each student. Depending on your class, students may be able to read it silently by themselves. If students read individually, be sure to read the story out loud as well. Alternatively, you may wish to do a model reading, or ask the students to take turns reading.

While reading the story aloud, encourage the students to think about their predictions based on the title and the vocabulary they expected to find. Encourage them to read for information that supports or challenges their predictions.

3. After reading the story: Comprehension and Interpretation. Use the following questions to check the students' comprehension and interpretation of the story. These questions are also designed to prompt the students to extend this analysis of Mary's experiences to their own navigation experiences. (Note: These comprehension and interpretation questions are listed on a student handout at the end of the story. If you choose to use the handout, be sure to hand out the questions after the students have finished the pre-reading activities and reading the story.)

- (1) *Why does Mary wake up early?*
- (2) *What kind of test does Mary have to have?*
- (3) *Where does she need to go to have this test?*
- (4) *From reading the story, what kind of feelings do you think Mary has about hospitals? Why?*

You may wish to answer questions 1 through 4 as a whole class. These questions help to clarify the events of the story. By discussing these questions, students begin to deal with issues of navigation. The first question relates to one of Mary's coping strategies for this experience and the fourth question gets into the deeper issue of navigating the feelings (a potential barrier) she has about the institutions even before she gets there.

4. Depending on the size of your class, Questions 5 to 9 can be discussed in small groups of 3 to 4 students. As the students discuss these questions, ask them to think about what Mary does to make going to the hospital easier (coping strategies). Also, they should identify what things are difficult for Mary as she tries to get to her doctor's appointment (barriers and obstacles). After each question, there are notes for teachers in parentheses that will help to anticipate or guide learner responses.

- (5) *Mary goes to the hospital with her friend Ana. Why do you think Mary asked Ana to go with her? (support--emotional and literacy: coping mechanism)*
- (6) *Why is it difficult for Mary and Ana to find their way to the MRI department? Find at least two reasons in the story. (Barriers--obstacles that exist in the hospital setting as they interface with Mary's literacy skills)*
- (7) *Do you think Mary was on time for her appointment? Why or why not? (coping strategies--leaving early--asking for help)*
- (8) *Mary has to fill out two different kinds of forms. What kind of information do you think she needed to give on the first form? How does Ana help her?(barriers--not understanding vocabulary; coping mechanisms--*

*asking friend for help. Another barrier perhaps is lack of familiarity with the idea of a family health history)*

- (9) *Why is Mary confused when the secretary asked her to fill out the insurance form? (barriers--lack of clear communication between doctor and patient/ schism between health care provider and insurance carrier)*
- (10) *The title of the story is "A Simple Test." Do you have suggestions for a different title? (learners reflect on meaning of story and where it takes them and leaves them)*
- (11) *Have you ever had an experience like Mary's? Have you ever been referred for a "simple test"? What was similar about your experience? What was different?*

Tell students to be prepared to report back to the group in 20-30 minutes. Circulate from group to group listening to student discussion. Note that Question 11 probes the students' own experiences, encouraging them to think about connections between their own experiences and Mary's experiences. Be sure to record all of the students' responses on the board as the groups report.

5. *Post-reading review.* After students have discussed questions 5 to 11, hang three sheets of newsprint with the following titles:

- Difficulties: Barriers
- Making it Easier: Coping Strategies
- What hospitals and doctors could do to make it easier for people to get help

Ask for a volunteer to help record all student responses on the appropriate sheets.

Explain to the students:

- Today we have read a story about one woman's experiences going to the hospital. She faced several difficulties in getting to the hospital, finding the doctor's office, and filling out forms.
- To review, let's list all the difficulties Mary faced and write them on this sheet *Difficulties: Barriers*. Mary also took several steps to try and make her trip easier. She did things on her own that helped her overcome some difficulties. In other words, she was able to deal with (cope with) some of her problems.
- To review, let's list all the things Mary did to help her overcome some difficulties on this sheet, *Coping strategies*.
- Finally, in your opinion, what are some things that the hospital or clinic could change to make it easier for people to get the help that they need? Let's write your ideas on this sheet, *Making it easier*.

## Suggestions for additional pre-reading activities

Less proficient readers often need pre-reading activities to help prepare them to read new texts. Typical pre-reading activities include: predicting the content of the text; facilitating a class discussion of the subject of the text; or eliciting what the students know about the subject of the text, what they don't know, and what they would like to know. We offer two additional pre-reading activities.

- *Predicting vocabulary in the story.* Present the students with the following list of words, some of which appear in the story, some of which do not. Ask the students to predict which words will be in the story and read carefully to see if they are right.

appointment	main entrance	radiology
barriers	maze	relieved
cardiovascular	MRI	resident
confident	obstacles	successful
form	overwhelmed	
insurance		

- *Predicting story content.* Ask the students to brainstorm possible characters, actions, and problems that they think may arise in a story and unique solutions to problems. To facilitate this kind of exploratory thinking, write these questions on the board:
  1. Where would you expect this story to take place?
  2. What other characters would you expect to find in this story?
  3. What do you think will happen to Mary?

## ESOL Teaching Tips

The pre-reading activity in Step 1 and the additional pre-reading activities described above were designed with beginning ESOL learners and less proficient readers in mind. To facilitate discussion among ESOL learners in particular, the questions were written using clear syntax and familiar vocabulary. Reading the story aloud will provide reinforcement of fluency and pronunciation.

It is important to carefully review the comprehension questions in Steps 3 and 4, especially for ESOL learners. An ESOL teacher who piloted this lesson suggested this approach for facilitating students' comprehension of the story:

*Ask students who understood the story well to teach students who had a more difficult time with the story. For example, after the students have read the story, ask them: "Who thinks they understood the article 100%? Who thinks they*

*understood only about 50-60% of the story? Who thinks they understood less than 20%?” Organize the class into groups, with each group made up of someone who understood the story 100%, 50-60%, and less than 20%. Students complete the discussion questions in these groups.*

Consider keeping a running vocabulary list and their meanings on the board so the learners can easily refer to new meanings while they are reading and discussing the story.

Visual prompts can help to reinforce the meanings of new vocabulary and the plot of the story. For this purpose, the story includes a photograph of a person getting an MRI test. You may also want to use some of the photographs in the Alternate Assessment Activity to reinforce new vocabulary.

The story will be challenging for beginning ESOL students. Students with science or health backgrounds may have less difficulty understanding the concept of an MRI. You may wish to break up the story in parts and read it over several class sessions. A good division would be to work on Steps 1-3 in one lesson, Steps 4-5 in a second lesson.

### **Alternate Activity with Photographs (if the reading activity is too difficult for your students)**

If you feel the reading will be overwhelmingly difficult for your students, consider using the Alternate Assessment Activity with Photographs instead of the story to facilitate discussion about students’ barriers to navigating the health care system.

You will find photographs and ideas for using them at the back of the In-Class Needs Assessment Packet.

### **Advanced ABE and GED Teaching Tips**

You may wish to ask the students to generate their own comprehension questions and “quiz” each other about the story to make this lesson more challenging for GED students. Students can learn to ask three kinds of questions:

- *Factual* (questions that have one right answer supported by information in the story, *What test does Mary need to have?*)
- *Interpretive* (questions with more than one answer based on information in the story, *Why does Mary bring her friend Ana with her?*)
- *Evaluative* (questions that ask for the reader’s personal opinions or beliefs about information in the story, *Why are medical tests often very scary for patients?*).

This framework is based on the Shared Inquiry Framework of the Great Books Foundation, <http://www.greatbooks.org/>.

If you feel this story will be too easy for your students, you may wish to initiate discussion by asking about their own personal experiences with health care system navigation. Ask them, *have you ever had difficulty going to a hospital or making a doctor's appointment?* Use their responses to generate the three lists described in Step 5: *Things people find difficult when going to a hospital, Things people do to solve their problems, and Things that hospitals should do to make it easier for people to get help.*

## Follow-up Activities

1. *Writing Activity #1.* Students write in their dialogue journals for eight to ten minutes on the topic of hospital navigation, Mary's experiences, or their own navigation experiences. These journal entries can be shared orally. After your students have written in their journals and shared their thoughts, ask them to develop a question (or questions) based on the topic of navigation for all groups to discuss.

*Question starters:*

How many ways...

What if...

If you were...

Suppose that...

How is \_\_\_\_\_ like \_\_\_\_\_?

2. *Writing Activity #2.* Invite learners to write a narrative about a time that they had to go to the hospital. The teacher should write at this point also. The emphasis in this writing activity should be on content, not spelling and grammar. This can be done as homework if class time is limited. Invite learners to share their stories.

## **A Simple Test – A Story**

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By Lee Hewitt

Mary woke up very early Monday morning. It was important to get up early to go to the hospital for an important test. Her doctor wanted her to have something called an MRI. The machines for these MRI tests were only available at the city hospital.

Mary's doctor had explained to her that MRI means Magnetic Resonance Imaging. It is a test that gives a very clear picture of the inside of the body. The doctor had said the machine uses magnets, not x-rays, and was very safe.



Picture: Person getting an MRI test \*

Mary had not slept well. Going to the hospital always made her nervous. She thought about sick people. She thought about the time when she and her mother went to the hospital after her father had gotten very sick at work.

Many times she went by the hospital on the bus. Whenever she took the bus to go shopping downtown, she saw it from the window. She heard the ambulances. She saw the hustle and bustle of people

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\* Photo courtesy of the National Cancer Institute.

coming and going. But she really didn't know which bus stop was the one for the hospital.

Today her friend Ana was going to go with her. That would help. Ana took classes at the community college. She didn't have classes on Monday morning, so it was no problem for Ana to go with her.

Mary's appointment was at 8:30 am. She had to get her four-year-old daughter Rosa ready for the daycare bus, which came at 7:45 am. Sometimes Rosa took a long time to eat her breakfast. Many mornings Mary had a struggle with Rosa about what color socks to wear! Mary hoped that this morning Rosa would get ready quickly.

At 8:00 am, Mary was waiting at the city bus stop. She saw Ana hurrying up the street. At the same time, the #39 Downtown bus was approaching the stop.

"Ana, it's number 39, hurry!" Mary shouted and pointed at the bus.

Ana, her hair flying behind her, ran to catch the bus with Mary.

Mary and Ana found two seats next to each other on the crowded bus. "What test do you need to have this morning?" Ana asked Mary.

"Something called an MRI," Mary replied.

"Did your doctor tell you where to go at the hospital for the test?" asked Ana.

"Not really. She said it was a simple test. She just told me to make an appointment as soon as possible. And I forgot to ask for directions when I called for the appointment. I hope we have time to find it. I really don't want to be late for my appointment," Mary said.

"I'm sure we'll get there on time. We can ask someone for help. We can go to the Information Desk, don't you think? If we can find our way around the grocery store with toddlers hanging off of us and do all our food shopping in a half an hour, this should be easy!" Ana remarked.

Walking down the street toward the hospital, Mary saw an entrance. “Here we go, Ana!”

“I don’t think so, Mary. That says Emergency Entrance. I think we have to find the Main Entrance. I’m pretty sure it’s down one more block.”

Mary looked up at the building overhead and told Ana, “I can’t believe how big this hospital is!”

Mary and Ana entered through the door under the sign that said “Main Entrance.” A map with a big arrow on it greeted them. The arrow said “You are here!” They studied the map carefully.

“I always have a hard time figuring out these maps. I don’t even see MRI anywhere on it, do you?” Mary asked.

“Let’s find the Information Desk,” Ana suggested.

Mary said, “Good idea.”

The man at the Information Desk listened carefully when Mary told him about her MRI appointment.

“Oh,” he said. “You have to go to the Radiology Department for an MRI.” He pointed to the elevators across from his desk and told them to take it down two floors. “When you get off the elevator, take a right and walk to the end of the corridor and then take a left. The Radiology Department is at the far end of that corridor,” he explained.

Mary and Ana took the elevator down. When they got off, they followed the directions the Information Desk man gave them. The corridors seemed dark and very long. They didn’t just go straight but snaked around. The directions seemed simple when the man at the Information Desk gave them, but they still felt lost.

Then Ana saw a young man with a white coat on. She asked him for help, but he said that he was a resident and it was his first day. He wasn’t sure where the Radiology Department was. Then Mary saw a person with a name tag pushing a cart and she asked him where the

Radiology Department was. The person pointed to a door almost at the end of the corridor, “Right there!”

Mary smiled and said, “Thank you!”

When they got to the reception desk in the department, the secretary greeted them. She gave Mary a clipboard with a health history form to fill out.

Mary asked, “Ana, what does *cardiovascular* mean? There is a question here that asks if anyone in my family has had a history of cardiovascular problems?”

Ana replied, “Well I know *cardio* means something to do with the heart, so I bet they are asking if anyone in your family has had heart problems. Didn’t your father have a heart attack?”

Mary nodded her head. She remembered the day of her dad’s heart attack well: the phone call, the rush to the hospital, trying to find her sick father in the maze of the hospital. Mary made a check in the box marked: “Yes.” Mary completed the form, sometimes asking Ana to help her.

When Mary handed in the form, the secretary handed Mary another clipboard with another form.

“Another form??? What is this one about?” Mary asked.

“I need your insurance information. We need to know what coverage you have,” the secretary explained.

Mary asked, “I thought that if my doctor referred me for the test you would already have my insurance information. Doesn’t my insurance cover it?” The secretary shook her head.

Mary sighed. She hadn’t even had the test yet and already she felt overwhelmed!

## **“A Simple Test” - Questions to think about**

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1. Why does Mary wake up early?
  
2. What kind of test does Mary have to have?
  
3. Where does she need to go to have this test?
  
4. From reading the story, what kind of feelings do you think Mary has about hospitals? Why?
  
5. Mary goes to the hospital with her friend Ana. Why do you think Mary asked Ana to go with her?
  
6. Why is it difficult for Mary and Ana to find their way to the MRI department? Find at least two reasons in the story.



## **Alternate Assessment Activity with Photographs**

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If you feel the reading will be overwhelmingly difficult for your students, consider using the following photographs instead of the story to facilitate discussion about students' barriers to navigating the health care system. You will still be able to gather valuable assessment information from your students even if they do not read the story.

Use the photographs to generate discussion and record students' responses on newsprint.

Hang three sheets of newsprint with the following titles:

- Difficulties/Barriers
- Coping strategies
- Making it easier

Ask students to look at the photographs and describe what is happening in each one. Then ask students to respond to the questions listed below:

1. *What do people find difficult about going to a hospital? (Difficulties/Barriers)*
2. *What can people do to solve some of these problems? (Coping strategies)*
3. *What things can the hospital or clinic do to make it easier for people to get help? What can doctors do to make it easier for people to get help? (Making it easier)*

Ask for a volunteer to help record all students' responses on the appropriate sheets.



### 1. Health care center sign with department names



Photo © Jon Crispin



## 2. Woman reading the health care center directory of doctors



Photo © Jon Crispin



### 3. Pharmacist discussing prescription with an older man



Photo © Jon Crispin



#### 4. Patient in a wheelchair getting directions from hospital staff



Photo © Jon Crispin



## 5. Patient talking with a doctor



Photo © Jon Crispin



## **Skills for Health Care Access and Navigation Session One Evaluation Form**

**Please complete the following evaluation and turn it in before you leave today.**

1. What was the most valuable insight, practical idea, or specific information that you gained from today's session?

2. How would you improve this session?

