Health Literacy and Chronic Illness Amongst Subsidized Housing Residents
Amina Benguedouar, Mary Lou Jacobsen, Ali A. Weinstein - Center for the Study of Chronic Illness and Disability

BACKGROUND
Low income communities in the United States are at the highest risk for chronic illnesses and conditions. Despite the alleviation of financial burdens that subsidized housing entails, chronic illnesses and their poor management remain prevalent in subsidized housing communities. In Fairfax County, subsidized housing recipients reside under two programs:
• the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program: recipients live in housing of their choice and the
• Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Project-Based Voucher program: recipients live in public housing units owned by the Fairfax Department of Housing

PURPOSE
To determine if the number of diagnosed chronic illnesses and conditions relate to the level of health literacy in public housing residents, as well as if the relationship differs between Fairfax County subsidized housing programs.

METHODOLOGY
• Analyzes responses from 17 self-reported surveys. Participants report on:
  ▪ whether or not they have been diagnosed with any of 11 chronic illnesses or conditions.
  ▪ how well they understand medical information provided by medical professionals.
• Participants must be over the age of 18 and heads of their households.
• Relationship assessed using Fisher Exact Test.

RESULTS
17 responses collected include 13 HCV program recipients and 4 RAD Project-Based Voucher program recipients (level of significance p<0.05). Results indicate relationship between frequency of chronic illness and health literacy:
• Exists among HCV program recipients (p=0.413)
• Exists across both program recipients (p=0.549)
A p value could not be computed for RAD Project-Based Voucher Program recipients due to lack of variety in chronic illness frequency.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION
• Data supports a relationship between health literacy levels and the number of chronic illnesses and conditions across both subsidized housing programs in Fairfax County.
• Likely indicates that improved health literacy is associated with fewer chronic illnesses, or that it is associated with an increase in chronic illnesses.
• Relationship between chronic illness frequency and health literacy could not be compared between recipients of both programs, as RAD Project-Based Voucher program recipients only reported 0 to 3 chronic illnesses and conditions.

LIMITATIONS
• Data is self-reported and deidentified, thus responses are unconfirmed.
• Some chronic illnesses are asymptomatic and remain undetected.
• Does not account for participation in Fairfax County subsidized housing program over the life course.