

PCH 358 – writing, presentations for health policy

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I should apologize, perhaps for the style of this bill. I dislike the verbose and intricate style of the modern English statutes. . . . You however can easily correct this bill to the taste of my brother lawyers, by making every other word a 'said' or 'aforesaid' and saying everything over two or three times so as that nobody but we of the craft can untwist the diction, and find out what it means.

-Thomas Jefferson, 1817

readers

- Readers have other options, many distractions
- You have precious little time to engage them
- Lose readers with every paragraph, every sentence, every word
- MEGO – my eyes glaze over

audience

- Most important – get this first
- Determines voice, tone, citation style, format, color vs. not, pictures
- Use language appropriate to audience
- Reach them where they are -- through their experiences, their motivation

tips

- Consider what you want the reader to understand
 - then don't clutter it up with anything that doesn't support that goal
- Plain English whenever possible
 - language use depends on audience
 - minimize jargon
- Less is more
 - edit mercilessly
- Avoid passive voice
- Most important info up front

tips

- Use short, simpler sentences
- Use clear words
- Be clear about your point, don't make them guess what you meant
- Don't repeat yourself
- Punctuate carefully
- When in doubt, leave it out
- Use the active voice
- Paragraphs should have one point

before and after

Before:

When the process of freeing a vehicle that has been stuck results in ruts or holes, the operator will fill the rut or hole created by such activity before removing the vehicle from the immediate area.

After:

If you make a hole while freeing a stuck vehicle, you must fill the hole before you drive away.

From: www.plainlanguage.gov

before

Existing Label

Allergy Tablets

INDICATIONS: Provides effective, temporary relief of sneezing, watery and itchy eyes, and runny nose due to hay fever and other upper respiratory allergies.

DIRECTIONS: Adults and children 12 years and over—1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours, not to exceed 6 tablets in 24 hours or as directed by a physician. Children 6 to 11 years—one half the adult dose (break tablet in half) every 4 to 6 hours, not to exceed 3 whole tablets in 24 hours. For children under 6 years, consult a physician.

EACH TABLET CONTAINS: Chlorpheniramine Maleate 4 mg. **May also contain** (may differ from brand): D&C Yellow No. 10, Lactose, Magnesium Stearate, Microcrystalline Cellulose, Pregelatinized Starch.

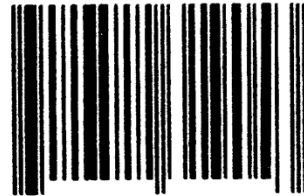
WARNINGS: May cause excitability especially in children. Do not take this product unless directed by a physician, if you have a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis, or if you have glaucoma or difficulty in urination due to enlargement of the prostate gland. May cause drowsiness; alcohol, sedatives and tranquilizers may increase the drowsiness effect. Avoid alcoholic beverages, and do not take this product if you are taking sedatives or tranquilizers without first consulting your physician. Use caution when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery. As with any drug, if you are pregnant or nursing a baby, seek the advice of a health professional before using this product. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. In case of accidental overdose, seek professional assistance or contact a Poison Control Center immediately.

Store at controlled room temperature 2°-30°C (36°-86°F).

Use by expiration date printed on package.

Protect from excessive moisture.

For better identification keep tablets in carton until used.



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Made in U.S.A.

after

New Standard Labeling Format

Drug Facts	
Active ingredient (in each tablet) Chlorpheniramine maleate 2 mg.....	Purpose Antihistamine
Uses temporarily relieves these symptoms due to hay fever or other upper respiratory allergies: ■ sneezing ■ runny nose ■ itchy, watery eyes ■ itchy throat	
Warnings Ask a doctor before use if you have ■ glaucoma ■ a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis ■ trouble urinating due to an enlarged prostate gland Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are taking tranquilizers or sedatives	
When using this product ■ drowsiness may occur ■ avoid alcoholic drinks ■ alcohol, sedatives, and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness ■ be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery ■ excitability may occur, especially in children	
If pregnant or breast-feeding, ask a health professional before use. Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.	
Directions	
adults and children 12 years and over	take 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 12 tablets in 24 hours
children 6 years to under 12 years	take 1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 6 tablets in 24 hours
children under 6 years	ask a doctor

Drug Facts (continued)	
Other information ■ store at 20-25°C (68-77°F) ■ protect from excessive moisture	
Inactive ingredients D&C yellow no. 10, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, pregelatinized starch	

tips

- Put contact information on **EVERYTHING**
- Cite everything, but how to cite depends on context

funny headlines

- Iraqi Head Seeks Arms
- Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says
- Farmer Bill Dies in House
- New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group
- If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last Awhile
- Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges

Source: www.plainlanguage.gov

less is more

Worse	Better
during the time that	while
there is no doubt but that	doubtless
this is a topic that	this topic
despite the fact that	although
in some instances	sometimes
that was a situation in which	there

lists

To qualify for HUSKY you must be a low income child, low-income parent or caregiver of a child, low income elderly, disabled, or have a specific condition, such as HIV, breast or cervical cancer.

– OR

To qualify for HUSKY, you must be low income and

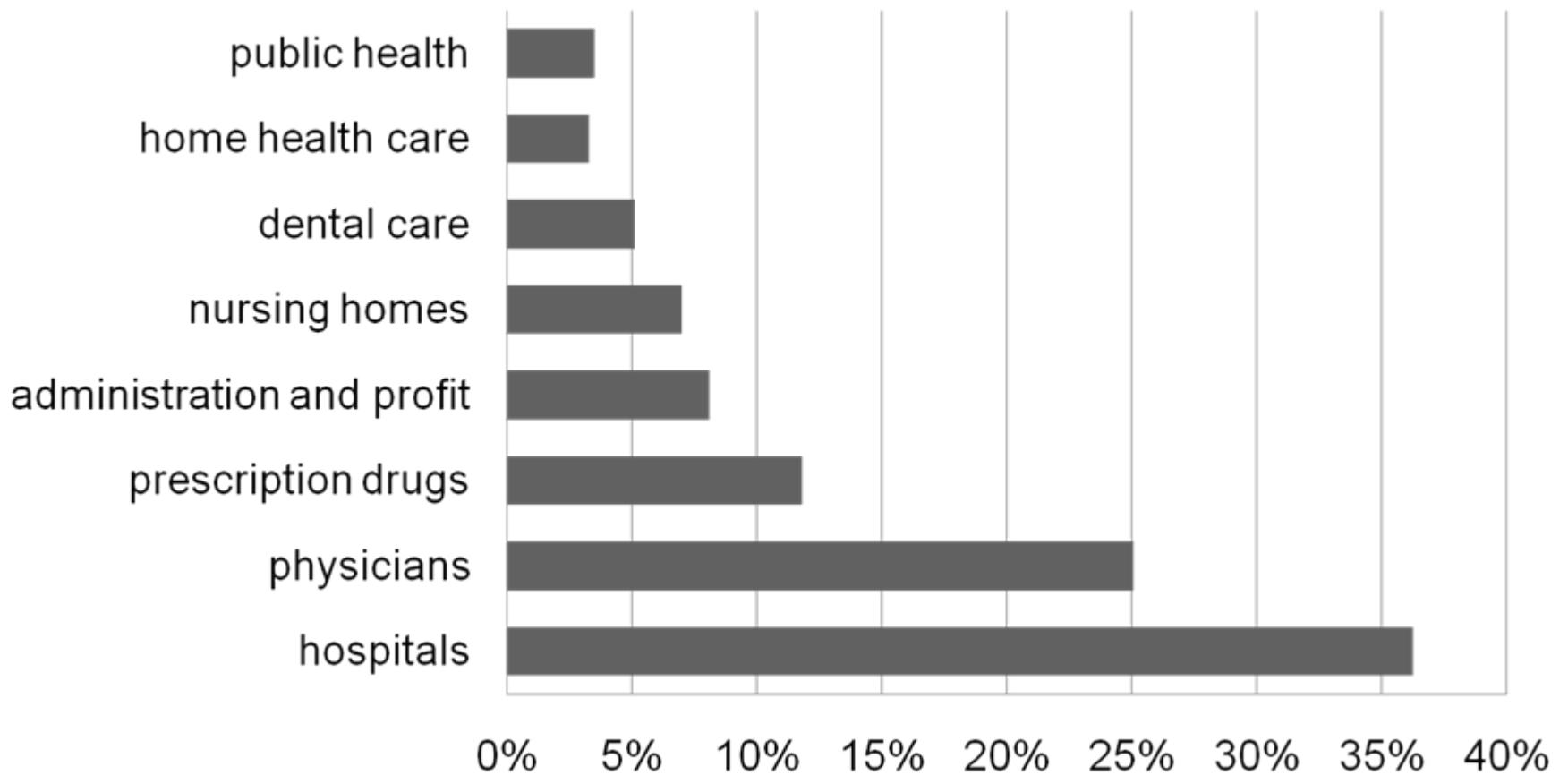
- a child
- parent or caregiver of a child
- elderly
- disabled or
- have a specific condition, i.e. HIV, breast or cervical cancer

display of information

In 2008, the US spent 36% of health care dollars on hospital care, 25% on physician care, 12% on prescription drugs, 8% on administration and profit, 7% on nursing homes, % on dental care, and 3% each on home health care and public health.

or

US health care spending 2008



process

- Look to other examples for format, content, style
 - Choose successful examples
 - Be as specific as possible
- Ask for guidance
- Plan it out
- Give it a day (or two)
- Read it aloud
- Proofread carefully
- Share with someone else
- Give multiple “products” for multiple users of the information

how to be a better writer

- Read good writing
- Read a lot -- follow good health policy sites, blogs, journals
- Write often
- Have others read your writing
- Contact the Writing Center

SOURCES

- Use most up to date sources
- Fact, fiction, propaganda?
- Best – peer reviewed journals, government sources, i.e. Census, BLS, CDC, CBO
- Next – respected, nonpartisan groups, i.e. Kaiser, RAND
- Press – use mainstream media, i.e. NY Times, Washington Post, LA Times
- Next – books, often authors have an agenda
- Worst – industry backed sources, secondary sources, opinion blogs

“consider the source”

- Language use – objective or emotional?
- Are assertions backed up with citations, evidence?
- Good mix of primary and secondary sources?
- Is this plagiarized? Check for others with same information
- Who funds the organization? Who is on the board? Where did staff come from?

good examples, sources

- Kaiser Family Foundation www.kff.org
- *Health Affairs* www.healthaffairs.org
- Urban Institute www.urban.org
- RAND www.rand.org
- Commonwealth Fund www.cmwf.org
- Major newspapers

presentations

- Get the details – audience, time, place, etc.
- What do you want them to walk away remembering – one or two things
- Prepare the talk and prepare for probable questions
- DO NOT read from slides or notes
- Practice on someone kind
- Leave handouts, but after your talk
- Have a beginning, middle and end
- Let them know what to expect
- Helpful to have an action step or place for more info at the end

Once a particular senator read a speech to a lunch group and succeeded in boring everyone. Afterwards a feisty old lady came up to him and said, “How do you expect us to remember your speech when you can’t remember it yourself?”

– Tip O’Neill, All Politics is Local

presentations

- Show up early
- Check systems
- Look at the audience
- Smile, when appropriate
- Talk slowly
- Ask for feedback/input when appropriate
- Leave time for questions or discussion
- Use humor carefully

presentations

- Relax
- Take a breath
- Everyone in the audience has been in your shoes at some point
- It gets easier the more you do it
- For more advice, go to http://www.cthehealthpolicy.org/toolbox/opinion/public_speaking.htm

Presentations for this class

- Issue should be timely, policy related
- Good background, put proximate issue in context
- Understand audience
 - What interests them
 - Level of understanding
 - What motivates them
 - Why they should care
- Balance – give both/all sides of issue
- Prove your point, don't just give opinions

Presentations for this class

- Clear and logical flow of information
- Good eye contact, speak clearly
- Be prepared for reasonable questions
- Use appropriate language
- Never Read the Slides
- Don't read from your notes – just talking points
- Give sources
- Where to go for more information